From:	Matt Kales
To:	Michael Thabault; Theresa Rabot; michael_fris@fws.gov
Cc:	Noreen Walsh; Nicole Alt; Pat Deibert
Subject:	Please read: preparation for 4/17-18 NPT meetings
Date:	Tuesday, April 15, 2014 2:11:22 PM
Attachments:	FWS.GrSG. April 17-18 NPT Meeting preparation.review draft.docx
Importance:	High

ARDs,

Per our huddle during the SDM meeting last week, please see attached current status on outstanding issues re: the federal planning process. Many thanks to Pat and the coordinators (and others, including Kris Tita in our regional SOL shop, who provided timely legal review and input) for pulling this together in short order. The purpose of this document is to summarize where we are on these issues and articulate our current position/recommendation for Noreen's discussions with the NPT later this week (and, as necessary, beyond). Please note this is an informal, internal and draft work product and not for distribution at this time.

Given the NPT will convene on Thursday morning, Noreen is copied here so she has adequate time to review this document. However, if the ARDs have substantive revisions to or questions about any of the content enclosed here, let's please address those – ideally via teleconference – before the call.

Please let Pat, Nicole, and me know if you have any immediate questions, and we'll share this out with the larger group who were involved with its development once everyone here is good to go.

Thanks. MK

From: Deibert, Pat [mailto:pat_deibert@fws.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, April 15, 2014 2:05 PM
To: Matt Kales; Nicole Alt
Cc: Jesse DElia; Kathy Hollar; Lief Wiechman; Kris Tita
Subject: Preparation for NPT meetings

Matt and Nicole -

Please see the attached document. I have "stacked" all the individual pieces so the issue papers are only 1 paper. They are alphabetical for ease of use. All individual pieces have been reviewed by the SOL and their comments incorporated. Please advise what additional information you may need.

Two individual pieces had attachments - monitoring and mitigation. I did not attach them to the primary document, but will do so if desired.

On a related note, comments on the BLM FIAT document are due this Thursday (the request for review came in today), and with Jesse's schedule there is no way he can provide comments in that window. Ted Koch is also on that team (and I think Terry is as well). But the primary concerns we have with that document are identified in the briefing here. So the ask is that we be given more time for review. If BLM's intent is to have comments on Thursday so that the issue can be presented on Friday then perhaps we simply verbally

express our concerns unless Terry and Ted are able to pull together comments. I doubt I will have time to do the review it deserves, and without having the entire history on the evolution of the document I may not be complete. Let me know how you would like to proceed.

A huge thanks to all for pulling this together!!!

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got leks?

ISSUE: Adaptive Management

Current Status: BLM and FS have drafted a table containing sideboards for planning teams to use in developing plan-specific adaptive management strategies. FWS (Pat Deibert and Jesse D'Elia) participated in discussions during the development of this draft table, but the team could not reach consensus on all aspects of the sideboards.

FWS Concerns: It is unclear whether the sideboards that BLM/FS drafted will be sufficient to ensure an internally consistent and sufficient adaptive management approach. Specific sideboards that are lacking include:

- a consistent and transparent approach for determining appropriate quantitative triggers; and,
- a consistent methodology (including temporal and spatial windows) for monitoring habitats to determine if a quantitative trigger has been tripped.

This lack of specificity in the sideboard document is likely to result in variability across the planning efforts. This is not necessarily a fatal flaw, but it is unknown at this point how much variability we will see. We have already observed that Wyoming and Idaho (State plans) have taken highly divergent paths in their adaptive management strategies. The greater variability we have in these plans across the range the more difficult it becomes to articulate a coherent range-wide conservation strategy for sage-grouse.

(b) (5)

[redacted]

FWS Position/Recommendation: Consistent approaches need to be incorporated across all plans for monitoring habitats. Consistent and transparent approaches should be adopted to determine the appropriate adaptive management triggers. However, we have two divergent but

sufficient adaptive management strategies for sage-grouse in Idaho and Wyoming. So, we recommend that other states look to these existing models rather than creating something entirely new.

- In the Great Basin, we recommend adoption of the Idaho model for adaptive management. This will require identification of management units, methods for monitoring change in sagebrush habitats, and quantitative soft and hard triggers. Ideally, the scale of management units would be similar across all planning areas in the Great Basin, percentages for soft and hard triggers would match, and habitat monitoring methods would be seamless across plan boundaries. Although population monitoring may differ from State to State, timeframes for evaluating population data (e.g., 3-year running average) would be coordinated across the Great Basin. While we fully support the Idaho model for adaptive management, we note that additional details regarding methods for monitoring habitat change are still being worked out and will need to be part of any final plan.

- In the Rocky Mountains, things are a little more complicated. Because Wyoming's model relies on a core area strategy with a very specific monitoring tool, it may be less transferable to other States; however, Montana is looking at adopting Wyoming's monitoring and adaptive management framework. We support efforts to adopt an adaptive management strategy similar to Wyoming's. We would also support application of the Idaho model in other Rocky Mountain planning areas.

ISSUE: Allocations

Current status: The BLM provided us a summary of the allocative decisions on April 10, 2014, which was updated on April 15. Two separate documents were presented, but contained the same information in different formats (narrative vs. tabular). The documents describe, by planning effort and region, what allocative decisions are being recommended by habitat delineation (e.g. priority, general) and program area (e.g. right-of-ways for solar/wind, leasable minerals). This is the first cumulative written summary (regional and range-wide) of these proposed allocative decisions. The summary does "lump" plans by similar recommendations, but does not provide any cumulative assessment of the conservation value to sage-grouse. Priority Areas of Conservation (PACs) are not specifically addressed, but management differences by habitat are described (priority vs. general).

FWS concerns: This compilation, along with the glossary of planning terminology provided at the Rocky Mountain Federal Family meeting in late February, does provide clarity on the diversity of resource allocation approaches and tools BLM and Forest Service are considering for inclusion in the final plans by explaining which lands are available for various allocations. However, these new documents do not address the cumulative effects of these actions on sage-grouse conservation and are clearly identified as recommendations.

- Details of the impact of the allocative decision on sage-grouse conservation are not provided. Additionally, many of the restrictive allocative decisions are caveated by the ability to provide modifications and waivers. There is no information on the triggers for implementing a modification or waiver, what the nature of those actions might entail, or any history as to the success of past waivers and modifications contributing to sage-grouse conservation.
- There is no assessment of the cumulative benefits or impacts of these individual program area decisions. It appears the cumulative assessment will continue on the current timetable of being completed after all individual plans have been approved.
- Information inferring the efficacy of conservation from implementation of these allocative decisions is not expressly provided, and it is likely that responsibility will fall to our assessment and judgment during the status review.
- The operating assumption is that an allocative decision will not be included in an FEIS if it was not identified in the DEIS or was identified but with low potential for development. This is in compliance with NEPA. If the resources are subsequently located, BLM has committed to re-initiating a planning process to address the issue. This delays planning decisions on some resources and does not provide us with assurances that the potential impact will be adequately addressed.

(b) (5)

- (b) (5) [redacted]

FWS position/recommendation –We are appreciative of this effort to provide a comprehensive list of allocative recommendations at the plan, region and range-wide level. However, we continue to strongly recommend that BLM and Forest Service adopt in the final plans allocation methods that comprehensively illustrate for the Service, and other partners and stakeholders, the degree to which allocations will affect sage-grouse habitat, at the PAC, sub-regional, regional and range-wide scales, and tie this effort directly to the section of the COT final report that identifies the specific threats to sage-grouse populations across the range. We also strongly recommend robust cumulative effects analyses be included in each plan, and across the regions and range-wide, to fully understand how these individual decisions will provide conservation to sage-grouse.

ISSUE: Invasives/Fire

Current Status: Fire and Invasives Assessment Team (FIAT) presented a webinar on April 4, 2014, describing a landscape prioritization for fire and invasive species management in the Great Basin. The prioritization was based on resilience and resistance of the landscape to fire and invasive species. Priority areas were identified as those with "low" resistance and resilience that had the highest densities of sage-grouse.
On April 14, 2014, the FWS received a framework document that describes the methods used for the landscape prioritization and which generally describes a step down process where management prescriptions would be formulated. Comments on this framework are due back to BLM by April 17.

FWS Concerns: The landscape prioritization essentially ignores areas of mid to high resistance and resilience. This does not seem wise. Priority areas should be all areas where sage-grouse densities are high and wildfire/invasives risk is high, recognizing that treatments may differ in areas with high resistance and resilience from those areas with low resistance and resilience. The framework for the step down assessments is not fully developed. More concerning is that there is no schedule for developing a functional step down assessments.

(b) (5) [redacted]

FWS Position/Recommendation: The landscape prioritization should be revisited with an eye toward prioritizing those areas where sage-grouse densities are highest and wildfire/invasives risk is greatest. BLM and FS should develop a detailed schedule for writing and implementing step down assessments in a coordinated manner across the priority areas in the Great Basin. A commitment to fund and implement the step down assessments will also be essential.

ISSUE: Mitigation

Current status: Briefing materials were prepared for Noreen in late March 2014. Since that time, the following new information has been made available:

- Jim Lyon's April 6, 2014 comments to BLM on the March 10, 2014 version of the BLM "drop-in" text for the FEISs. These comments are supportive of many of the FWS positions on mitigation.
- DOI April 2014 Strategy for Improving the Mitigation Policies and Practices of the Department of the Interior, A Report to The Secretary of the Interior from the Energy and Climate Change Task Force. This document:
    - is compatible with the approach the FWS has recommended for Greater sage-grouse
    - calls for a greater emphasis on landscape-scale mitigation
    - cites challenges with the mitigation sequence defined by CEQ ((40 CFR 1508.20) avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce or eliminate over time, and compensate), especially in the context of project- and site-specific approaches.
    - offers a solution of developing landscape-scale strategies that ensure the effective implementation of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, compensate) in planning major development activities.
    - Identifies the Mitigation Framework for Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation as one of the near-term policy deliverables to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2014.
- April 4, 2014 draft (version # 30) of the FEIS "drop-in" text: Greater Sage-grouse RMPA/FEIS Template Language for Addressing Mitigation. Specific comments on this new text are attached.

The draft "Greater Sage-Grouse Range-wide Compensatory Mitigation Framework" (Framework) being prepared by FWS to assist all conservation partners as they develop or refine mitigation programs has not been formally updated since the last distribution draft dated November 1, 2013. The FWS Greater sage-grouse Mitigation Team will be closely reviewing the DOI April 2014 Strategy for Improving Mitigation Policies and align the Framework as needed.

FWS Concerns: How will the final BLM and FS mitigation strategies ensure all anthropogenic impacts in all greater sage-grouse habitat are assessed and the mitigation sequence (avoid, minimize, compensate) is properly and consistently applied such that a net conservation gain for sage-grouse is achieved; and, ensure that compensatory mitigation actions that are taken on BLM/FS lands will be made durable?

(b) (5)

[redacted]

- If monitoring results will inform BLM's mitigation program, the record should clearly reflect that BLM will perform the necessary monitoring, explain how that monitoring ties into the mitigation program, and provide enough detail for FWS and a court to determine that this monitoring will be sufficient to support implementation of an effective mitigation program.

FWS position/recommendation: The BLM/FS goal for mitigation planning should be to ensure that an action results in no net unmitigated loss of sage-grouse habitat by striving for a net conservation gain and the mitigation sequence should be consistently applied for all anthropogenic impacts in all greater sage-grouse habitat. For impacts that are unavoidable, compensatory mitigation should be designed to achieve the greatest conservation benefit for the species, be durable, and should be targeted to within PACs and other locally identified important habitats.

Additional considerations/comments: The BLM and FS should foster partnerships to contribute or design mitigation strategies that will prevent fragmented landscapes, restore core areas, and provide connectivity necessary to sustain sage-grouse populations regardless of land ownership or jurisdictional borders.

ISSUE: Monitoring

Current status: Weekly inter-agency calls were held through February 13th, at which point calls were postponed because of work necessary to prepare and participate in the Fed Family meetings. The BLM continued working on the framework internally, soliciting review from their planners. The inter-agency calls reconvened on April 3rd, but the Monitoring sub-team (FWS reps: Lief Wiechman and Lara Juliusson) was not given any opportunity to review or provide additional input on the framework. The latest draft (attached) was provided to the NPT on April 9th for review.

FWS concerns: Our concerns have been conveyed to the BLM prior to and after the Rocky Mt. Fed Family Meeting in February.

- Implementation: There is a lack of detail as to 'how' implementation will be tracked.
- Fine/Site Scale Monitoring: The Service has concerns with the lack of detail in the fine- and site-scale monitoring.
- Adaptive Management: It is unclear how this monitoring will tie into adaptive management.

(b) (5) [redacted]

FWS position/recommendation:

- **Implementation**: The monitoring framework states that implementation details will take place at the Plan level, and will be developed within a year of the ROD but doesn't provide any further detail. The Service has concerns that even if an implementation plan is completed within a year of the ROD, it will not be completed in time to be included in the status review. Items that are lacking include: a common set of metrics or methods, to be implemented across all the Field Offices, to better analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of all actions across the range, as well as the response/reaction to greater sage-grouse, and a centralized tracking tool for collection, roll-up, and reporting of tabular and spatially explicit data. Data should have the ability to be integrated with on-the-ground conservation efforts conducted by other Federal and State partners.
- **Fine/Site Scale Monitoring:** More detail was provided in the latest version; however, the Service would still like to see how both direct and indirect impacts of anthropogenic disturbance will be measured at the fine- and site-scale, so they can inform mitigation needs to offset impacts across the range. The Service would like to see how fine- and

site-scale monitoring data sets will be rolled up and made consistent between plans (understanding differences between the Great Basin and Rocky Mt. regions), as well as how fine- and site-scale monitoring will incorporate land ownership other than BLM and FS. In addition, when calculating disturbance, it is unclear as to what the alternative is for Field Offices/State Offices that do not have a 'density disturbance calculation tool' (e.g. Wyoming DDCT), and how will measures of disturbance data, using these variety of tools, be standardized across Field Offices range wide?

- **Adaptive Management 'tie-in':** Although not directly part of the Monitoring Framework, the Service would like to see the following explicitly addressed in the Monitoring Framework:
  All three broad/mid-scale measures, Vegetation (Sagebrush availability), Disturbance ('activity', density, reclaimed), and Population (demographics), should inform Adaptive Management (AM) triggers. Understanding that not all triggers are related to vegetation and/or disturbance, WAFWA should be informed of the population (demographic) measures (active leks, trends, males, etc.) that are used to inform AM triggers within each state/region. Broad/mid-scale monitoring efforts could inform states (and other landscape units) where immediate fine/site-scale monitoring should take place to evaluate whether soft and/or hard triggers have been met and what changes in management should be implemented.
  At the fine/site-scales, regardless of whether broad/mid-scale monitoring has identified or suggests an area where further fine/site-scale monitoring is warranted, the fine/site-scale monitoring should include specific details from the HAF, as well as those habitat characteristics (and population metrics), that will inform AM triggers at the fine/site-scale.
  Details regarding the monitoring methodology are needed at all scales to help determine when adaptive management triggers are tripped. The AM sub-team will identify the actual limits, but the Monitoring Framework could provide 'available metrics' that can be used at multiple scale and areas or interest. This may result in differences between the Great Basin and the Rocky Mt. regions, which should be resolved if possible. Minimally within regions, there should be a consistent set of methods/metrics across Field Offices/State Offices.
- **Additional concerns:** Some of the PACs may not be large enough (geographically) to use the broad/mid-scale data. The BLM can group these PACs together for analysis, but currently does not have a method as to how they would be monitored individually. The Service would like to know how this data and reports will be provided. The Service would like to see information shared through an easily accessible data sharing portal (e.g. LCMAP).