

From: [Stephen Torbit](#)
To: [Kevin Doherty](#)
Subject: Fwd: Sage-steppe potential deliverables for FY15 holdback
Date: Friday, January 30, 2015 8:44:15 AM
Attachments: [Big_Ideas-Jan2015.docx](#)

Duo

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Ken Berg <ken_berg@fws.gov>
Date: January 29, 2015 at 5:08:08 PM MST
To: Stephen Torbit <Stephen_Torbit@fws.gov>, Todd Hopkins
<todd_hopkins@fws.gov>
Cc: Stephen Zylstra <stephen_zylstra@fws.gov>, Craig Czarnecki
<craig_czarnecki@fws.gov>
Subject: Sage-steppe potential deliverables for FY15 holdback

Todd,

These are great. Thanks very much. Just what I wanted.

I have shared with our team. Torbit may contact you directly next week to follow up.

Ken

Ken Berg
USFWS - PSW Region 8
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Begin forwarded message:

From: Todd Hopkins <todd_hopkins@fws.gov>
Date: January 29, 2015 at 3:55:23 PM PST
To: Ken Berg <ken_berg@fws.gov>
Subject: LCC / GBLCC Big ideas - per your emails of 1/23

Ken,

See attached, I've not had time to cost things out, but I can do that if you let me know which seem most likely to happen.

Todd

Todd E. Hopkins, Ph.D.
Science Coordinator

Jan 29, 2015 Submitted by Todd Hopkins, Science Coordinator, GBLCC

Some big ideas for the LCCs and the Great Basin LCC in particular

1. Continue ongoing work with the States and the CHATs (known as the CHAT - LC MAP project) and find a place to house the CHAT-LC MAP effort for the long term. CHAT – LC MAP effort is currently being led by the GNLCC (Yvette Converse and Sean Finn) and we need to see how to accelerate or broaden it (so far only Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Kansas, Washington have committed to partner). No cost estimate – need to talk to GNLCC staff
2. Take the Resistance/Resilience/Fire and Invasive Assessment (FIAT) east of the Great Basin. The Great Basin effort was done by the WAFWA Fire & Invasive Group chaired by Ken Mayer and was largely donated staff time as most were in/around Reno. I spoke to the lead author of the R&R (Jeanne Chambers, USFS) and she'd very much like to take this eastward, but she feels that there needs to be some coordination on who the right players for the team would be as eastern SG issues differ from the Great Basin. Most would likely be agency folks, but some could be university and perhaps some NGOs are needed too. It would be important to bring in key players (e.g., Steve Knick, Mike Wisdom) to help. I suggest scoping and then providing Ken Mayer with funds for travel, perhaps stipends for the academics, and possibly some tech support for certain analyses or for the key players to pay their tech staff so they can participate. No cost estimate
3. Add climate change to the R&R/FIAT protocols. Currently, these spatially-explicit decision support tools are static – they do not factor in climate change at all. Thus, actions planned on the landscape for sage grouse conservation in the short term may not be good long-term decisions in a changing world. Partnership with one of the SW/NW CSC and the GBLCC. Cost estimate \$65,000.
4. Identification of the Great Basin as an iconic landscape per the Presidents Priority Agenda for Climate Change (Ken, I sent this to Elsa on Jan 27). **Great Basin** (Great Basin LCC – BLM, USFWS, USFS, DOD, NPS, NV, ID, UT, OR, CA). Vast expanses of iconic sagebrush habitat have been lost, fragmented, or highly altered due to invasive plants and changes in fire regimes. Over 350 plant and animal species at risk of local or regional extinction depend on sage-steppe habitat. A spatially-explicit resistance and resilience and Fire and Invasive Assessment (FIAT) decision support tool has been used to determine where priority actions will take place within priority sage-grouse habitats. Project Goals: 1. Design and implement comprehensive, integrated fire and invasive plant strategies for the FIAT evaluation areas in the Great Basin.* 2. Utilize risk-based, landscape-scale approaches to identify and facilitate investments in fuels treatments, fire suppression capabilities, and post-fire stabilization, rehabilitation, and restoration in the Great Basin.* 3. Incorporate climate adaption principles into the resistance and resilience and FIAT for the Great Basin. 4. Determine the carbon sequestration potential for the priority actions generated from the resistance and resilience and FIAT. (*Actions listed in Sec. Order #3336)

5. Organize a Great Basin Geospatial Summit. This could be in-person or virtual but the Great Basin (and NV especially) is one of those places that lacks certain basic information. For example, no Basin-wide layer of cheatgrass cover exists – only bits and pieces are mapped and yet this is essential for the Resistance Resilience and Fire and Invasive Assessment (FIAT) planning for sage grouse conservation. Likewise comprehensive data on springs and seeps, and riparian/wetland areas either doesn't exist or are so old and low resolution that they are not FGDC compliant. For greater sage-grouse, wetlands play an important role in providing brood rearing habitat. Despite encompassing < 2% of the land area, wetlands are keystone features that structure populations as evidenced by >80% of breeding distributions clustered within 10 km of wetlands. This summit could be virtual and in person. First, conduct assessment of what is needed – this will necessitate identifying key resource management needs across many organizations, determine data availability or gaps, where/how to centralize or link all the existing data, and then hosting a summit to have participants flesh out a path forward (similar to the Next Steppe meeting). This concept was recently suggested to the GBLCC Steering Committee by the GBLCC and also fits into SO #3336 Section 6.
6. Implementation of the Secretarial order #3336. Implementation Plans are being drafted as I write this..... GBLCC could have a role in:

Sec. 5e. Advance the development and utilization of technologies for identifying areas of high ecological and habitat value in sagebrush-steppe ecosystems to enhance fire prevention and sage-grouse habitat protection efforts.

[GBLCC could lead this effort in a coordinating role, such as bringing in a DSS training or pilot with new technology like biocontrol –see 5F]

Sec 5f. Apply science and research to improve the identification and protection of resistant and resilient sagebrush-steppe landscapes and the development of biocontrols and other tools for cheatgrass control to improve capability for long-term restoration of sagebrush-steppe ecosystems. *[GBLCC is working with the FWS Partners program and the Great Basin Institute to apply biocontrols (ACK55) to 10 half-acre plots on private lands in FY15.]*

Sec 7

In general:

Best available science is all over the SO but Traditional Knowledge is not. One role for the GBLCC would be to help bring in Tribal knowledge. The GBLCC has a very active Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (S-TEK) program. Tribes are partners in the GBLCC, and four tribes serve on its steering committee. The GBLCC is engaging tribes in drafting an S-TEK strategy document, funding S-TEK research projects and trainings, and will soon be launching a new website which will include TEK resources.

The GBLCC has partnered with the Great Basin Research and Management Program and the Great Basin Fire Science Delivery Program and already have a science locator and an expertise data base as well as a bibliography online.

Sec. 7b. viii. The GBLCC Science Committee has recently decided to adopt a strategy of funding proposals in alternate years. This allows the GBLCC science team to find cross-cutting multi-disciplinary and large-scale efforts with significant external leverage (match) rather than fund many small projects.

7. Landscape Conversations. Have the GBLCC convene a facilitated conversation about the wild horse issue, at least for Nevada, where 80% is federally managed. NV BLM estimates that in 10 years the number of wild horse Animal Unit Months (AUMs) will equal that of cows, because wild horse populations are increasing at 10-15% per year. A 2013 NAS review said to use fertility control methods but BLM just got sued while trying to do just that (<http://www.rgj.com/story/news/2015/01/27/lawsuit-targets-pine-nut-horse-roundup/22438341/>). There seems to be no action which will appease all stakeholders. Suggested Action: GBLCC, as a non-regulatory and partner-based organization, can encourage dialog between the wild horse advocates, ranchers (BLM and FS Permittees), and BLM in Nevada. Currently BLM has a National Wild Horse & Burro Advisory Board but there is great tension and even open hatred of some members by other members. BLM cannot use either unrestricted sale of horses (DOI/BLM policy decision), nor can they euthanize horses as a means of reducing numbers in the wild. Thus, they have filled to capacity their holding areas, and have maxed out their adoption efforts (adoptions plummeted with the economic downturn). The threat of sage grouse listing has permittees fearful of AUM reductions (which happened for desert tortoise), which would just allow horses to eat all the unused AUMs and accelerate their population growth while degrading sage steppe habitat. The GBLCC would play a facilitative convening role, probably bringing using a facilitator from the Center For Conflict Resolution (funded through National LCC Office => GBLCC) to see if some common ground can be agreed upon. The wild horses are a part of the sage grouse conservation equation not dealt with by the FIAT or other planning. **Note: This has been discussed with Ted Koch (NV FWS) and Raul Morales (BLM NV Dpty for Resources) but needs to be cleared by Amy Lueders, BLM NV Director as well as Ren, and perhaps even by BLM & FWS HQ**