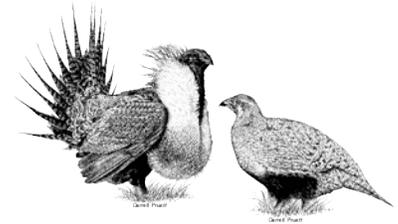


# Final Meeting Summary



**Idaho Sage-grouse Advisory Committee**

**June 2 and 3, 2011**

**Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Boise, ID**

## **Attendance**

The following individuals attended some or all of the meeting on June 2 and June 3, 2011: Jon Beals (Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation), Donna Bennett (Owhyee LWG), Lynn Burtenshaw (Upper Snake LWG), Sam Chandler (Big Desert LWG), Neil Crescenti (Idaho Department of Lands), Jack Depperschmidt (Department of Energy-Idaho), Brett Dumas (Idaho Power), Dave Ellis (Challis LWG), Karen Fullen (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Steve Goddard (Idaho Wildlife Federation), Neil Hillesland (Mountain Home group), Ron Kay (ISDA), Don Kemner (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Paul Makela (Bureau of Land Management), Rob Mickelsen (US Forest Service), Ann Moser (IDFG), Rochelle Oxarango (Idaho Wool Growers), John Peavey (North Magic Valley LWG), Wendy Pratt (East Idaho Uplands LWG), Mike Remming (Jarbidge LWG), Lara Rozzell (ICL), Alison Squier (Facilitator), Mike Todd (South Magic Valley LWG), and Kendra Womack (US Fish and Wildlife Service).

## **Review Agenda and Opening Introductions**

Don Kemner welcomed everyone to the meeting. Alison Squier reviewed the agenda and asked if anyone had any changes or additions; there were none. Don said that the new Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) Director Virgil Moore would stop in to say hi to the SAC at some point during the meeting.

## **SAC Business**

### **Approve October 2010 Notes**

SAC members approved the final October 2010 meeting notes.

### **Review Hunting Season recommendation Process**

Ann Moser reviewed the hunting season recommendation process. The process is the same as in previous recent years. She said that in the next week or two she will send updated lek data to all LWGs. Many of the LWGs have meetings scheduled for June to talk about the data and develop hunting recommendations for consideration by IDFG. Don and IDFG staff will review all of the LWG recommendations and develop final recommendations for consideration by the Commission. There is also a public scoping process that anyone may participate in. The new hunting season recommendations will be presented to the Commission at their July meeting. The Commission will then make a final decision in August.

Ann said that this year lek counts are mostly up. In determining the hunting season the three-year running average is used to decide (per the state Sage-grouse Conservation Plan). That is because sage-grouse are long lived birds and they take longer to respond to changes.

#### Discussion:

- Steve Goddard asked Ann if she could send the lek data for all of the LWG planning areas to everyone. Ann said she usually just sends it to the facilitators and regional biologist for each specific LWG area. The data is summarized for each sage-grouse reporting zone, then specific information related to their LWG zone is sent to each LWG.
- After some discussion, most SAC members indicated that they didn't want to see the data for all the other planning areas.

#### Follow-up actions:

- The following individuals specifically requested that Ann Moser send the summary data for all the zones: Steve Goddard, Lara Rozzell, Paul Makela, Kendra Womack, and Karen Fullen.

#### Other Business

Alison asked those SAC members who have indicated that they do not have regular access to emails or prefer to receive meeting notices and notes through the mail if they were receiving the materials in a timely fashion. They responded yes, although Dave Ellis had not received the June meeting agenda until shortly prior to the meeting. David Smith will continue to forward snail mail copies of critical SAC information to those members.

#### SAC Member Updates

SAC members and other participants provided the following updates:

**Paul Makela** (BLM) – Paul has been working with Don Major recently on the sage-grouse priority areas modeling project. They've been working on it for about a year along with the breeding density model. During the fall and winter Don and Paul have been working with GIS and the various lek and habitat data sets to draft priority areas. Paul said it is close to being complete. They are writing a white paper that summarizes the background and processes. They used a combination of the breeding density model which captures most of nesting habitat. Don developed a lek connectivity surface that identifies polygons on the landscape where leks/birds are likely more connected. They are also incorporating a population persistence model that Cam Aldridge developed, that is essentially a measure of sagebrush continuity. By stacking the different layers together in the priority area model, they will be able to show discrete priority area polygons as well as a gradient of “hot spots” for targeting certain sage-grouse conservation around the state and WAFWA Sage-grouse Management Zone 4. Paul said that several areas such as Browns Bench/ Shoshone Basin and Medicine Lodge pop out in the initial analysis as being important for sage-grouse conservation. Paul anticipates they'll be able to use this information to help target policy direction on what types of activities may or may not be recommended in those areas.

At a national level, BLM is also discussing a land use plan amendment process targeting Wyoming and the Northern Great Basin (Idaho, southwest Oregon, north Nevada, northwest Utah). Those were two areas that the USFWS identified as remaining strongholds in their recent status review. Comments are due July 6<sup>th</sup>. On Thursday and Friday Paul attended a wind/wildlife focus group in Portland meeting to talk about research needs as related to wind development.

**Dave Ellis** (Challis LWG) – Dave reported that they had their last Challis LWG meeting a couple weeks ago. The focus of that meeting was to put together project proposals. They had six different projects they looked at - two for submission to the SAC. The other big meeting topic revolved around it being the last meeting Wendy's would facilitate due to funding shortfalls. Dave said that that was a big item of discussion. The LWG IDFG representative will facilitate the next Challis meeting; however, Dave noted that the IDFG representative doesn't want to do it. Dave commented that without the facilitator's leadership the group would likely falter. The next meeting is scheduled for September.

**Lara Rozzell** (ICL) – ICL is continuing to pursue mitigation on a statewide basis. They are looking at how to spend mitigation dollars as projects come onto BLM land. They are continuing to talk to other conservation groups. They are also looking at the China Mountain EIS. Lara noted that it is encouraging how much information was taken from the Idaho state conservation plan and incorporated into the EIS.

**Neil Crescenti** (IDL) – Neil introduced himself and said that he is the new SAC representative for IDL. He is a grazing agriculture and conservation manager. He's been with IDL for 4 months so he's just trying to get up to speed at this point. Neil told the group that Mike Murphy had hoped to attend but couldn't make it.

**Mike Todd** (South Magic Valley LWG) – Mike said that the South Magic Valley LWG lost their facilitator as well due to the lack of funding for facilitators. The LWG has had two meetings but Mike missed both of them. The LWG still doesn't include any private landowners and just consists of agency representatives at this time. They've pretty much run out of ideas for how to engage the public. The LWG has one project that they are supporting. Their conservation plan still is in the embryonic stage. As of now the three agency representatives will continue to meet and identify projects they can support and hope to figure out ways to engage more non-agency folk.

**Mike Remming** (Jarbidge LWG) – Mike said the Jarbidge LWG met about 5 weeks ago to come up with two projects for this round of funding. They have an upcoming meeting to talk about the possibility of developing a LWG comment letter on China Mountain; however, this may be difficult since some members of the group will profit from project. They were scheduled to do a Dixie Harrow sagebrush-thinning project last year but got snowed out; they will try to do it this October. They have seed in storage in a refrigerated center. The Jarbidge group is also losing their facilitator, Mike Pepper, due to lack of funds. Brad Lowe with BLM may take over for the short-term. Mike commented that he had served previously as the facilitator and said that it is a hard job. He didn't know how Brad will be able to do it while also wearing his agency hat. It is much easier for someone who doesn't have a dog in the fight to run the group.

**John Peavey** (North Magic Valley LWG) – John said that they've also lost their LWG facilitator Mike Pepper due to funding issues. The LWG has one project they are bringing to the SAC that the group feels very strongly about. The project involves looking at bird populations in the area where a proposed relocation of the airport is slated. There are a lot of birds in this area. There is a lot of coordinated rancher activity north of Carey where folks have formed a group called the Pioneer Alliance. There is also a group east of there called the Central Idaho Grazing network. There is also a lot of activity going on that is sponsored by NRCS as part of the Sage-grouse Initiative. They are trying to get ranchers involved and knowledgeable. In their area there is a lack of grazing pressure in the fall. John said he's an advocate of fall seed tromp rest rotation. He thinks that will be incorporated in the North Magic Valley plan. They have another meeting scheduled in July.

**Rochelle Oxarango** (Idaho Woolgrowers) – Rochelle said she didn't have much to report from the Idaho Woolgrowers. She has attended a couple of CCAA meetings and commented that that's been "interesting".

**Sam Chandler** (Big Desert LWG) – Sam said that as with the other LWGs, they've lost their facilitator Wendy Green Lowe due to funding shortfall. The local IDFG representative is supposed to take over facilitation; he is probably the person that's missed the most meetings. At their last meeting they identified their LWG project proposals for the SAC. Their next meeting is set for June 20.

**Lynn Burtenshaw** (Upper Snake LWG) – At their last LWG meeting they mostly discussed the project from last year. They had the big Jefferson fire on DOE land. One of the plans was to reseed that area using 12,000 plants that were grown at the Lucky Peak nursery. Unfortunately they had a virus at the nursery and had to destroy the 12,000 plans. Their nursery is going to bring them some new plants. The LWG also talked about the fencing projects. The group had a tearful goodbye for Wendy she's been there for a long, long time – since the beginning. Terry, the IDFG representative, is not real comfortable with being the new facilitator.

**Donna Bennett** (Owyhee LWG) – Donna said that they fired their facilitator a long time ago and things got better after that. First John Romero was the chair, now Donna is. They have a skilled note taker and that format seems to work well for their group. Their last meeting was April 27, and the main purpose was to put the group's project proposal together. They had a mastication project tour on May 25. Last fall they got snowed out. They will do the work they planned for last year this spring as soon as they can get machinery back on the land. Participation at the mastication tour turned out well. Donna commented that what impressed her was the amount of chips and stuff under the trees; it is rotting really well and grass is coming up. Their LWG has decided that their old LWG conservation plan needs to be updated. The plan had a five-year window and they're up to seven years now. A civil contractor from the Air Force base has been helping Michelle Common-Kemner on updating it. The three biggest threats they've identified in their area are 1) fire, 2) juniper encroachment, and 3) annual grasses. They're postponing the release of their next draft plan until next year.

Donna, Karen Steenhof, and Jason Pyron from USFWS put together a series of tours for high school kids and they went out to the lek at Oreana. Donna went on a tour to Rimrock and they counted 30 sage-grouse on a lek. They also visited sage-grouse habitat on Reynolds Creek and talked about juniper encroachment; there is also a water experimental station up there. Karen Steenhof has been really interested in the Gateway West project and has been going to all of those meetings.

**Neil Hillesland** (Mountain Home LWG) – The Mountain Home group is in its infancy. They've tried for the last 4 to 5 years to get one started. This year they've got a group that's going to survive. Participants include IDFG, BLM, NRCS, and many local individuals. They are meeting the second Thursday of every month. Their next meeting is July 7. They didn't know where their birds were located in their planning area. They applied for and received a grant to look for them and this spring they collared 11 sage-grouse; 9 males and 2 females. They are going out once or twice a week to see where the birds are. They've put forward another project that would help them get a better idea of the ground cover where birds are. There's lots of local involvement.

**Steve Goddard** (Idaho Wildlife Federation) – Steve said he's in the Mountain Home group too and has been attending the meetings with Neil. Steve commented that it is a unique group that includes a widespread group of interests including quite a few ranchers. They are making progress.

Steve has been spending time reviewing the China Mountain EIS it is about 1,200 pages long. The EIS is pretty comprehensive on biological data and they site the state conservation plan as source. Steve

noted that to Jack Connelly and Steve Knick's book on sage-grouse is now out (Studies in Avian Biology) it costs \$95.

**Rob Mickelsen** (USFS) – The Forest Service finished the Curlew Nation Grassland monitoring report this spring. The website is too long to list but you can Google it under Curlew National Grassland. The SAC previously recommended funding for high-resolution aerial photography work; that work is continuing. They are continuing with sagebrush habitat mapping on the Targee, Caribou, Curlew and Sawtooth national forests.

**Wendy Pratt** (East Idaho Uplands LWG) – They got their plan done. Other than that, Wendy said she was sad that she'd missed the meeting where Wendy said goodbye.

**Karen Fullen** (NRCS) – Karen said she didn't have anything to report on other than what us on agenda for her to provide updates on. The House Agriculture Committee passed a 2012 agricultural appropriations recommendation that made some program cuts and general cuts to USDA funding. It still has to go through the Senate. Some farm bill programs will likely be cut and the general fund money they use to pay staff will be cut 15% or so. They're offering retirement incentives and trying to reduce staff.

**Jon Beals** (OCS) – Jon acknowledged that the sage-grouse funding issue is a big deal. OSC is continuing to talk with Congressional folks. But everyone has to understand that earmarks are no longer an option (the \$1 million in sage-grouse funds that was previously allocated was an earmark). They are trying to figure out how to get sage-grouse funding. They think they can pull something off but not clear what that will look like. Jon acknowledged Rochelle Oxarango's comment that the CCAA meeting she went to was "interesting" by saying that yes, the CCAA process has proved challenging. Ron Kay and Jon Beals went to visit with the West Central folks to talk about it. They are currently trying to figure out steps forward. There is some direction from the Governor's office they are trying to provide guidance for state lands and/or private landowners.

Jon has been participating on Nate's behalf on the mitigation subcommittee and that effort is making some good progress.

**Jack Depperschmidt** (DOE-Idaho) – Jack reported that the Mountain States Transmission Intertie draft EIS is tentatively scheduled for release at the end of this year. DOE will have an environmental assessment coming out soon related to disposal of radioactive waste. They are looking at two sites that have been burned, within ¼ mile of an existing facility. Back in December it looked like a 20-megawatt wind farm would go forward now its not looking like it will happen. A private entity is looking to put in a 100-megawatt wind farm east of INL. DOE hasn't heard from BLM on whether the right of way application went in. The project would be in the Upper Snake area. DOE money for new projects isn't going forward.

**Brett Dumas** (Idaho Power) – Gateway West us slowly moving forward... maybe. A draft EIS will be released in the fall. They are currently in the process of developing/implementing a sage-grouse analysis process. The Boardman Hemmingway project is in the data collection process; a scoping report is out.

**Kendra Womack** (USFWS) – Kendra noted that the USFWS filed a work plan in May 2011 in a consolidated case in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia as part of a proposed agreement with one of the agency's most frequent plaintiffs. If approved by the Court, the workplan would allow USFWS over a period of six years to review and address the needs of more than 250 species now on the list of candidates for protection under the ESA to determine if they should be added to the Federal Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. The proposed date

for a decision (i.e., either a proposed rule to list, or a not-warranted finding and removal from the candidate list) regarding greater sage-grouse is 2015. The Judge has not approved the settlement and work plan at this point. There is still one major plaintiff that isn't part of the settlement.

**Ann Moser** (IDFG) – Ann said she's still getting ready for Saturday's vegetation monitoring workshop and getting lek data entered. She wanted to add something about the Mountain Home group. She said their members are actually helping with sage-grouse radio telemetry on a volunteer basis. Also in the project they have proposed the landowners are very involved.

**Don Kemner** (IDFG) – Don said that he has been working on finding funding for SAC and LWG support for next year. He is very aware of the concerns in the LWGs about losing their facilitators and had been doing everything he could to find funding for continued facilitation of the LWGs. Don noted that the IDFG representatives have only been asked to facilitate one meeting for the various LWGs, that is the upcoming meeting that is dealing with hunting. The SAC will be talking more about facilitator funding later in the meeting after completing the project review.

Lately he has been working at the WAFWA level with his counterparts in adjacent states to look at how we can provide assistance in moving projects forward to prevent a listing decision.

## **Sage-grouse Conservation Project Review Process Overview**

### **Review SAC Process and Desired Outcome**

Alison provided an overview of the SAC approach to reviewing and ranking the project proposals.

LWGs and others submitted applications to IDFG by May 12 (applicants were also invited to submit proposals for a technical pre-review by the SAC TAT on May 1). On May 13 SAC members were sent hard copies of all of the project proposals and copies of the ranking criteria and were asked to review those prior to the June SAC meeting. SAC members were invited to submit any questions on the proposals by May 27. Responses to those questions would then be supplied at the June SAC meeting (no questions were submitted).

At the SAC meeting the project proponent or other representative will provide an overview of the project and SAC members will have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the project. Then, each SAC members will provide their scores for the project. Then, the SAC will briefly discuss their scores and reasons for those scores and SAC members will have an opportunity to change their individual scores if they wish to. After completing the review of all the projects the combined scores will be put in their ranked order (habitat project by default receive 5 additional maximum points) and a line will be drawn where the funding cut off falls. SAC members will then discuss any additional considerations e.g., recommendations for less than full funding, possible funding delay for projects with later start dates, geographic equity of historical funding, etc. to determine if any additional adjustments to the funding cut off line or project ranking are warranted. The SAC will then confirm their final funding recommendations.

The SAC's funding recommendations will be provided to Director Moore (IDFG) and Administrator Fisher (OSC) who will make the final determination on which projects receive funding. In the past, the Director and Administrator have generally followed the SAC recommendations. Don anticipates that they will make a final decision in June or July 2011. Award packets will then be send to the successful applicants in July 2011. Project Agreements will be developed and signed and funds should be released within 30 days of completion of a funding agreement.

## Review SAC Project Evaluation Criteria

Alison briefly reviewed the project evaluation criteria with the SAC and reminded everyone that the criteria have been modified after the prior year's ranking process based on SAC input. The SAC also identified a number of lessons learned during the last funding process. Some of those were incorporated (e.g., cap on acceptable overhead rate, evaluating all habitat projects together and all monitoring project together, etc.) in this year's review and some weren't incorporated in this round but will be in the in the next (a summary of lessons learned from both 2010 and 2011 and recommended changes to the review criteria is included after the funding recommendations).

The evaluation criteria used for this review were:

- 1) Is the project endorsed by a LWG?
- 2) Ongoing (was the project previously funded with Idaho Cooperative Sage-grouse funding?)
- 3) Ownership (largest ownership in the are impacted by the project)
- 4) Match % (includes both in-kind accosts and actual funds)
- 5) Overhead costs (cost the receiving entity charges to administer the grant and funds)
- 6) Objectives clearly stated (Is the need for this project clearly explained with clear objectives?)
- 7) Methodology (Is the project methodology appropriate to achieve the project objectives?)
- 8) Monitoring (Is appropriate monitoring identified to measure effectiveness of the project?)
- 9) What are the project benefits relative to the cost?
- 10) Do the costs seem comparable to similar projects in the same area?  
Numbers 11, 12, and 13 apply only to habitat projects.
- 11) Benefits to sage-grouse or sage-grouse habitat
- 12) NEPA (initiated, or completed, or not required?)
- 13) Scale of project (size of area impacted)  
Numbers 14 and 15 apply only to population monitoring projects.
- 14) Benefits to sage-grouse management or knowledge about sage-grouse
- 15) Scale of project (scale of project applicability)

The highest possible score for habitat projects is 125 points; the highest possible score for monitoring projects is 120 points.

## Previous Sage-Grouse Conservation Funding Distribution

Ann Moser provided a summary of sage-grouse funding by SGPA through 2010. The amounts on the table below do not include facilitation costs.

<b>Spending by Sage-grouse Planning Area (through 2010)</b>			
<b>SGPA</b>	<b>Number of years funding received</b>	<b>Total amount received</b>	<b>Average amount per year</b>
Big Desert	3	\$68,100	\$22,700
Challis	5	\$118,700	\$23,740
Curlew	6	\$134,400	\$22,400
East Idaho Uplands	4	\$72,500	\$18,125
Jarbidge	7	\$171,650	\$24,521
Mountain Home	1	\$14,010	\$14,010
North Magic Valley	4	\$30,000	\$7,500
Owyhee	8	\$293,900	\$36,738

Shoshone Basin	4	\$72,350	\$18,088
Upper Snake	9	\$493,387	\$54,821
West Central	6	\$148,000	\$24,667
Shoshone -Paiute Tribes	5	\$77,500	\$15,500

SAC members suggested in the future adding the # of acres per sage-grouse planning area and the number of birds (where possible) to the table.

## Review and Rank Project Proposals (June 2 and June 3)

During June 2 and June 3 the SAC reviewed and ranked the 15 project proposals that were submitted. The following summary is presented in the order that the SAC reviewed the projects.

### HABITAT PROJECTS

#### Project 2011-02 Big Desert Road Grading and Fuel Breaks (Big Desert LWG)

*Project description:* Develop fuel-breaks by improving existing roads and roto-mowing the brush 150 feet on each side of the road in order to reduce the size of wildfires in the Big Desert. Project work is planned to start in Fall 2011.

*Funding requested:* \$16,000

*Match:* \$16,000

*SAC discussion:* SAC members discussed whether some of effort could eventually be accomplished with increased targeted grazing. However, other members pointed out that a challenge in this area is that it is riddled with roads and it would be difficult to graze those strips, also less sheep are available since herds have been reduced, an additional challenge is common allotments in the area. Some SAC members were concerned about how effective this technique was to protect sagebrush. Another concern was that the monitoring proposed doesn't address fire frequency. Other SAC members noted that the area lost .5 million acres in 2005 fire. In general, the SAC agreed that developing and maintaining fuel breaks is important in this area due to the scale of historical fires.

#### Project 2011-03 Big Creek Ranch Sage-grouse Habitat Restoration Plan (Challis LWG)

*Project description:* The project would involve multiple smaller projects to improve the area to sage-grouse as a whole. Fences would be modified, grazing rotation would be changed, and habitat restoration implemented. Project start is planned for July 2011.

*Funding requested:* \$20,000

*Match:* \$155,000

*SAC discussion:* The Challis LWG decided not to prioritize their projects and leave it up to Dave Ellis to make the call at the SAC meeting. After discussion of both Challis LWG projects at the SAC meeting, David identified this as the LWG priority project. There were a number of concerns about the overall quality of the project proposal, for instance there was no map included that showed where the seeding is needed. Sage-grouse Initiative funds have been applied for and although a decision hasn't been made yet, Karen Fullen indicated that it looked like that NRCS had enough funds to fund all eligible applications. SAC members had some concerns about implementation and monitoring;

however these issues would be addressed through the NRCS process since the NRCS has fairly rigorous monitoring requirements.

#### **Project 2011-05 Blackfoot River Southern Riparian Fence (East Idaho Uplands LWG)**

*Project description:* Construct 6.5 miles of fence to prevent livestock from accessing 3.9 miles of the Blackfoot River. Project start planned for summer 2012 or 2013.

*Funding requested:* \$97,900

*Match:* \$64,000

*SAC discussion:* Major SAC concerns were that the match for fence maintenance was allocated over 20 years and that the association was not on board with the project. Some SAC members felt the BLM should be funding this project since it is on BLM land. However, one member pointed out that the BLM field office doesn't have funds for fencing. The Idaho Watershed Board did not fund this proposal and suggested that the proponent might use recreational funds. The grazing advisory board has funds that could be accessed as an alternate funding source. SAC members felt the project focus is more recreational than geared towards sage-grouse. The producer has not made an effort to go after Sage-grouse Initiative funds.

#### **Project 2011-07 Lower House Creek Pond Jack Fence Project (Jarbidge LWG)**

*Project description:* Complete construction of a jack fence around a pond that was reconditioned in 2010 to improve water quality and storage for livestock and wildlife. Project start planned for Summer 2011.

*Funding requested:* \$2,000

*Match:* \$6,000

*SAC discussion:* The project is located in late summer higher elevation sage-grouse habitat that's in pretty good condition. Repair work on the pond is done, and the rancher wants to fence the pond off to protect it from cows. The pond is spring fed. The project was submitted for EQIP funding but they won't know if they got it until July. SAC commented that the jack fence is expensive; however, one member pointed out that the jack fence will keep out elk that could puncture the sill and allow water to leak out. Some SAC members wanted to know more about how this project would benefit sage-grouse, the surrounding landscape is grassland and they weren't sure how much habitat a 5 acre enclosure buys you.

#### **Project 2011-09 Measuring Habitat Quality in the Mountain Home Sage-grouse Planning Area (Mountain Home LWG)**

*Project description:* Measure the range and extent of habitat quality for sage-grouse, primarily on private and state lands. Project start planned for March 2012.

*Funding requested:* \$15,100

*Match:* \$9,521

*SAC discussion:* SAC members commented that this was most well written proposal of all of this year's proposals, everyone really appreciated the quality and completeness of the proposal. They also really appreciated the high level of landowner involvement in the project. This is also one of the first projects proposed by the group. The SAC enthusiastically supported this project.

#### **Project 2011-11 Urquidi-Jacks Creek Basin Brood Rearing Wet Meadow Restoration (Owyhee LWG)**

*Project description:* Increase brood rearing habitat for sage-grouse, waterfowl and other nesting birds along Little Jacks Creek basin by restoring a wet meadow to its natural function. Project start planned for late summer 2011.

*Funding requested:* \$9,345

*Match:* \$3,755

*SAC discussion:* This project is the LWG priority, it is similar the previous Crab Creek project, but is new project. SAC members expressed no concerns with this project and supported it.

#### **Project 2011-12 Jefferson Fire Sagebrush Seeding on Idaho Department of Lands (Upper Snake LWG)**

*Project description:* Establish a number of sagebrush stands by hand-planting 12,000 seedlings in areas where the 2010 Jefferson fire burned across IDL lands. Project start planned for fall 2011.

*Funding requested:* \$7,540

*Match:* \$2,000

*SAC discussion:* In the past they tried flying seed on to the site but that wasn't very successful, therefore they've adopted the hand-planting approach. The 12,000 plants were grown but succumbed to a fungus. The plants are currently being regrown and will come from BLM (cost is not included in match or costs). Some SAC members were concerned about the effectiveness of planting 12,000 sagebrush seedlings in the context of the area burned. However, in discussion it was clarified that there was no expectation that the planting would restore significant habitat in the near term – but that it will help to create a future seed source for the long-term. There were SAC concerns about seed source, but on checking it appears that seed is from a local source. The SAC noted that prior to awarding funding a permittee signature is needed.

#### **Project 2011-15 Camel Rock Sagebrush Steppe Restoration (South Magic Valley LWG)**

*Project description:* Reduce juniper encroachment in the Magic Valley through hand cutting and mechanical treatment. Project start is planned for October 2011.

*Funding requested:* \$17,000

*Match:* \$336,222

*SAC discussion:* There were substantial concerns among SAC members about the high administrative cost of this project and about inflated cost estimates presented in the proposal, which appeared to artificially inflate the match. SAC members felt there was adequate funding available from other sources to allow this project to move forward without OSC funding.

#### **Project 2011-01 Big Desert Fence Marking (Big Desert LWG)**

*Project description:* Improve visibility of fences to sage-grouse by adding markers between t-posts along 17 miles of fences that are within 1000 meters of active leks. Project start is planned for May 2012.

*Funding requested:* \$6,000

*Match:* \$5,687

*SAC discussion:* SAC members asked why the LWG didn't apply for NRCS Sage-grouse Initiative funds. The response was that on the Big Desert there are so many committees involved that they couldn't get everyone on board to do the paperwork; there are some 30 permittees involved. The project will impact more than one population of sage-grouse. Some SAC members questioned how much good fence marking actually did. In discussion, one SAC member quoted a recent masters degree project that identified a 74% decrease in fence collisions with vinyl makers, in Wyoming a 70% decrease in

sage-grouse collisions, and 100% on lesser prairie chickens. Some SAC members suggested placing markers closer together than proposed.

#### **Project 2011-08 Jarbidge Field Office Fence Marking (Jarbidge LWG)**

*Project description:* Mark 14.2 miles of fences that are within 2 km of active leks. Project start is planned for September 2011.

*Funding requested:* \$5,900

*Match:* \$3,000

*SAC discussion:* SAC members noted the discrepancy in costs between this project and project 2011-01 (due to difference in spacing of reflectors). There was some concern that the costs for the project may be underestimated. There has been a decline in lek attendance since the Jarbidge fire. The SAC was supportive of the project with one caveat i.e., SAC recommends adding reflective tape to the markers. In ancillary discussion some SAC members commented that it would be really helpful to get more standard guidance on what to use for markers and preferred spacing, they were concerned that they'd already marked fences and now the preferred approach was changing. A number of SAC members also expressed frustration at the continuation of a sage-grouse hunting season while all these other efforts that potentially impact fewer birds (e.g., fence marking) are occurring – they also expressed the view that it sends the wrong message to people. Other SAC members felt the impact from fences was significant relative to hunting.

#### **Project 2011-13 Small Fence Strike Reduction Upper Snake (Upper Snake LWG)**

*Project description:* Increase visibility of fence lines within 1000 meters of 3 known leks to reduce sage-grouse strikes. Project start is planned for September 2011.

*Funding requested:* \$2,100

*Match:* \$1,100

*SAC discussion:* This project is not the LWG's first priority. The LWG did some marking last year and some the year before so this is an ongoing project. A lot of the ranchers in the area aren't fans of reflectors so the project proponents hope to show folks that they're not that bad. The project includes fence stays and reflective markers. There are about 10,500 feet of fence. SAC members had some concerns about the monitoring for the project e.g., how often are they walking the fence? Will frequency be enough to adequately monitor impact? SAC members hope that the monitoring will be sufficient to accurately gauge the impact of the project and encouraged the proponents to review the monitoring plan.

### **MONITORING & TELEMTRY PROJECTS**

#### **Project 2011-04 Seasonal Habitat, Migration Corridor Delineation and Nesting Habitat Assessments (Challis LWG)**

*Project description:* Trap and radio-collar sage-grouse to further knowledge of movements and use of habitat within the Challis SGPA. Project start planned for March 2012.

*Funding requested:* \$26,900

*Match:* \$35,400

*SAC discussion:* Some SAC members were concerned about the amount of funds allocated for IDFG personnel in this proposal. However, in discussion it was noted that much of the cost is for tags which IDFG doesn't necessarily have funds for – not for personnel. This project will address a lack of

information in this area by determining where birds are and where they're going; it will also complete previous studies. *Note: the budget was corrected from the application, which didn't show the full Forest Service cost share and erroneously identified IDFG overhead.* Some SAC members felt the proposal lacked sufficient detail in terms of the monitoring component. The SAC supported funding this project but would like additional detail provided on the vegetative monitoring component.

**Project 2011-06 Lek Search and Documentation in Less Studied Portions of the East Idaho Uplands (East Idaho Uplands LWG)**

*Project description:* Utilize helicopter and ground surveys for a 2-year investigation to determine sage-grouse lek location in less studied portions of the planning area. Project start is planned for April 2012.

*Funding requested:* \$23,000

*Match:* \$7,500

*SAC discussion:* This is an ongoing project they did work in 2008 and 2010. The East Idaho Uplands were identified as the second area in the state where sage-grouse were likely to be extirpated. There is very little information about this population and they don't know where the leks are. The planning area is made up of high country and often snow covered. This is a two-year project with aerial surveys in 2012 and ground-truthing in 2013. Some SAC members commented that the helicopter costs seemed high and that 19 hours of flight time is a lot to put in within the time frame identified. The SAC recommended funding the project but requests delivery to the LWG of an interim report after the first year documenting the first year's findings.

**Project 2011-10 Monitoring Sage-grouse Movements near Proposed Friedman Memorial Airport Site (North Magic Valley LWG)**

*Project description:* Radio-collar and monitor 40 sage-grouse at an important wintering site that is proposed for a new airport. Project start planned for January 2012.

*Funding requested:* \$20,950

*Match:* \$56,022

*SAC discussion:* The project would be in the location of a proposed new airport. This appears to be an area where a large number of birds winter, although there are not many leks there. In a survey of 8 leks routes, they found 541 birds in a 2-mile radius of the site. SAC members agreed that the proposed airport poses a potentially very serious threat and that the impact is likely to be larger than the 2 mile radius. SAC agreed that this was very high priority project and supported it fully.

**Project 2011-14 WCLWG Sage-grouse Telemetry Investigations (West Central LWG)**

*Project descriptions:* Continue to use radio telemetry to monitor sage-grouse movements. Project start planned for July 2011.

*Funding requested:* \$22,900

*Match:* \$8,985

*SAC discussion:* The SAC was concerned that no written report of findings for the last two years of the project had been delivered at this point. This project has been going on for 5 or 6 years now and SAC members felt that in light of limited available funding, funds should be allocated to other areas where there are substantial information gaps. The SAC members present at the meeting were unanimous in their concern about continuing to fund a project for so many years within the context

of severely limited funding. SAC members also had questions about the status of the CCAA and associated funding. SAC members acknowledged that the project has been a valuable one that has yielded a lot of valuable information and has garnered extensive landowner involvement. As part of this discussion the SAC recommended that the SAC TAT should work to develop a strategy for helping prioritize telemetry work since it can be very expensive, but is also important.

## NRCS Sage-grouse Initiative Update

Karen Fullen provided an update on the NRCS sage-grouse initiative. A total of 72 applications were received; 64 for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and 8 for the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). This is more than 3 times the number of applications received in 2010. Karen thanked the SAC members for helping to get the word out. Karen distributed a handout showing the number of applications for each county and noted that SGI has become a significant workload for some Field Offices. Field Offices are currently determining eligibility, ranking applications, and starting the planning process needed to obligate contracts for a July 1 deadline. Due to the increased amount of funding received for 2011, Karen thought it likely that all eligible applications would be funded again in 2011.

## SAC Subcommittee Reports

Don recommended that the funding subcommittee report be provided prior to finalizing the project ranking. For the sake of flow of these notes the other two subcommittee reports are included here.

### Funding Subcommittee

Don distributed a summary of the notes from the December 15<sup>th</sup> funding subcommittee meeting (Attachment 1). To remind everyone of the overall funding environment and reason for having limited funds for this year's Cooperative Sage-grouse project, Don Kemner distributed the letter from the SAC to the IDFG and OSC Directors with SAC recommendations regarding disbursement of the \$1 million sage-grouse earmark (February 2010). He also distributed the directors October 2010 reply to the SAC.

Don then distributed an update of available funds as of May 2011:

\$337,659	Available funding as of May 30 <sup>th</sup>
- 33,766	IDFG overhead (per SAC recommendation capped at Available funding ≤10%)
- 19,018	Non-reimbursed April/May bills (estimate)
-129,468	Outstanding commitments from past RFPs
-120,000	Allocated for this FY 2011 RFP
-4,500	June SAC meeting (does not include SAC facilitation, which is from different funding source)
-12,000	FY12 SAC meeting (estimate for 4 meetings, does not include facilitation)
-12,000	Fund set aside to help landowners participate in Sage-grouse Initiative (approved by SAC in October 2010)
<hr/>	
\$6,907	BALANCE

Don reported that the Funding Subcommittee had contacted the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Forest Service to see if they could provide any funding support to support SAC or LWG facilitation, the answer was no. One of the Funding Subcommittee's assignments in Chapter 6 was to develop a 5-year funding plan. In talking about that task the subcommittee had previously talked about finding funding to support the creation of a sage-grouse grant writer. However, they've dropped that item because the NRCS is working with Intermountain West Joint Provider to create a range-wide sage-grouse position to help with implementation of the Sage-grouse Initiative. This would result in there being two positions to help NRCS staff with the Sage-grouse Initiative.

Don suggested that it made sense to talk about the funding situation and the issue of facilitator funding prior to finalizing the funding recommendations at this point too. Don explained that BLM and IDFG were willing to provide some additional funding to help provide facilitator funding for the next year. In addition, the \$12,000 allocated by the SAC as potential landowner assistance for Sage-grouse Initiative funds was not used so that can be put toward facilitator funding. There is no additional funding available from the Forest Service. Kendra Womack said she would check on possible USFWS funds. There's no funding available for 2012 but there's a possibility there is some funding left from the end of year funds that could be accessed. Between these combined funding sources and the remaining approximately \$6,900 there was likely adequate funding for another years facilitation for the LWG and SAC.

Don asked the SAC if given the additional funding their preference was to fund an additional project or to fund the LWG facilitators and SAC facilitation. The SAC indicated a preference for funding facilitation rather than funding additional projects. Most SAC members felt the facilitators were critical to maintaining the progress of the LWGs.

Following is a summary of the proposed funding allocation for the facilitation:

Source	LWG Facilitation	SAC Facilitation
BLM	\$10,000	\$10,000
IDFG	\$5,000	\$5,000
Funds the SAC previously allocated to SGI	\$12,000	\$0
Additional carryover	\$6,900	\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$33,900</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>

The group also discussed the preferred frequency of SAC meeting. Alison polled the group on the frequency they'd like to see and what they'd like to see the SAC cover:

- Dave E. – At least 2 meetings/year. Information sharing. Summer field trip.
- Karen F. – 2 meeting/year. Group was formed to write the plan, they are now implementing the plan. Getting LWG reports and tracking progress and lack of progress.
- Lara R. – 2 meetings/year. Exchanging best ideas, lessons learned. One field trip.
- Mike T. – 2 meetings/year plus subcommittee meetings. One meeting to review funding proposals, one meeting for a field trip and information exchanges. SAC should have expectations that we get reports back from project proponents. We need feedback on whether projects did or didn't work. Should get something back in writing to increase accountability.

- Wendy P. – 2 meetings/year. Not keen on the field trip. More discussion of how LWGs are doing. Maybe rotate more in depth discussion by planning area. Work on implementing the plan.
- Jack D. – 2 meetings/year. Review of proposals is vital. What matters is getting things on the ground. Review the protocols for project review. Subcommittee meetings 2 times a year.
- Niel C. – 2 meetings/year. Spring and fall with the option of a summer meeting. In adding to the updates tackle one major topic at the meeting. Consider other implementation processes.
- John P. – 2 meetings/year. Review spending proposals. There's real value in having a place where landowners and agencies from around the state sit together.
- Rochelle O. – 2 meetings/year. SAC member updates. New research presentations. More information about populations in the state and range-wide. Don't need field day. Good to hear from USFWS on what is going on.
- Paul M. – 2 meetings/year or 3. Chapter 4 needs to be updated. And populations and habitat mapping needs to be updated. Incorporate more formal updates on projects. As plan amendment kicks off that could take the place of updating Chapter 4.
- Sam C. – 2 meetings/year. LWG updates, USFWS updates, funding review, hunting season discussions.
- Lynn B. – 2 meetings/year plus subcommittee meetings. Want to have an opportunity to review the approach to hunting. At some meeting in future need accounting from OSC on funds. Think we'll get funding again some day. Need to review infrastructure challenges. LWG updates. Want to know about progress on mitigation framework. Population status updates.
- Donna B. – 2 meetings/year with a caveat – if something like the Murphy Fire happens again might need an additional meeting to address. Like learning about other areas of the state. Occasional tour of project area is interesting. SAC carries big stick and we need to keep going because of that.
- Neil H. – 2 meetings/year. Reports from LWGs. How are project going? Brainstorm ideas for projects and ways to make things work better.
- Steve G. – 2 meetings/year plus subcommittee meeting. LWG reports, subcommittee reports. Reports on sage-grouse projects, new research. Update Chapter 4. Update on plan implementation progress. Population update for Idaho and range-wide.
- Rob M. – Maximum of 2 meetings/year. Go to one if there a challenge filling the agenda. Information exchange and subcommittee meetings. Population status updates. Plan maintenance by subcommittee then present recommendation to full SAC. Like the summer field trip.
- Brett D. – 2 meetings/year of two day long meetings with an optional field trip. Taks is implementing the plan and supporting the LWGs. Updates from USFWS, IDFG, maybe USGS. Updates on landscape analysis and project updates. Look at lessons learned and project successes.

- Kendra W. – 2 meetings/year. The SAC represents a unique composition of people and a unique opportunity for interaction. Information sharing. We are likely to see a lot of things happening at the landscape scale. It will be important to have a forum to share that information. Subcommittee meetings are valuable. Want to see the plan updated.
- Ann M. – 2 meetings/year. Need reports on projects, not necessarily from the LWG representative in all cases, might be the project proponent. Plan maintenance sounds better than rewrite.
- Don K. – 2 meetings/year. Need a review of the USFWS listing decision as to why the service thought sage-grouse deserved listing. What actions are being taken and/or need to be taken at the range-wide scale to address those threats. What can we do at the state and LWG level?

After this review the SAC agreed to meet two times a year for approximately 2 days per meeting for the next year. In addition there will be 1 to 2 SAC subcommittee meetings (or as needed) in the next year.

The SAC also requested that at the next meeting Jon Beals provide an update on the status of the \$1 million allocation (e.g., how much has been spent, on what, etc.)

#### Follow-up:

- Kendra Womack will check to see if there is any available USFWS funding from FY11 to contribute to the sage-grouse LWG facilitation and operations.
- Add update from OSC on fiscal status to next SAC agenda.

#### Education Subcommittee

The Education Subcommittee currently has 6 members. They met for a half-day in December. The subcommittee members compiled all currently available public documents and brochures that they could find. There is a substantial amount of existing materials. A key challenge is making sure that the right materials are available to people and that they know how to get those materials. The IDFG website is currently being updated. Once that is complete it may be possible to make some of these materials more accessible. The subcommittee is developing two PowerPoint presentations for use with public groups. These will then be available for LWGs, individuals, etc. who would like to share information about sage-grouse and their habitats with different groups.

#### SAC TAT Subcommittee

The SAC TAT met in December and reviewed all the tasks in the management plan and updated those. Notes from that meeting are provided in Attachment 2. Ann noted that there are lots of tasks identified in Chapter 6 that the SAC TAT can't do themselves but there are different ways to get that information. Including 1) presentations at SAC meetings, and 2) the SAC newsletter. The last issue of the SAC newsletter featured an article from Jack Depperschmidt reviewing new predation research. There was an article in the FSA newsletter about expiring CRP lands. The subcommittee did develop some new language for recreation events (e.g., OHV and Mountain Bike) guidelines. The SAC needs to address how to add this new conservation measure to the state plan at a future meeting. We also need to look at better ways to ask questions for inclusion in the annual reports.

#### Follow-up:

- Add agenda item to future SAC meeting to discuss adding new recreation events conservation measure.

- Add agenda item to future SAC-TAT subcommittee meeting to discuss the types of questions to include in the LWG surveys for development of the annual report.

## Final Recommendations and Ranking

The following table summarizes the SAC's final funding recommendations:

Project #	Project Title	LWG Sponsor	SAC Rank	SAC Score	Requested OSC Funds	Matching Funds	SAC OSC Funding Recommendation
2011-02	Big Desert Road Grading and Fuel Breaks	Big Desert	1	108.2	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$16,000
2011-10	Monitoring Sage-grouse Movements near Proposed Friedman Memorial Airport Site	North Magic Valley	2	107.8	\$20,950	\$56,022	\$20,950
2011-09	Measuring Habitat Quality in the Mountain Home Sage-grouse Planning Area	Mountain Home	3	102.0	\$15,100	\$9,521	\$15,100
2011-08	Jarbidge Field Office Fence Marking	Jarbidge	4	98.8	\$5,900	\$3,000	\$5,900
2011-01	Big Desert Fence Marking	Big Desert	5	98.0	\$6,000	\$5,687	\$6,000
2011-06	Lek Search and Documentation in Less Studied Portions of the East Idaho Uplands	East Idaho Uplands	6	97.6	\$23,000	\$7,500	\$23,000
2011-11	Urquidi-Jacks Creek Basin Brood Rearing Wet Meadow Restoration	Owyhee	7	94.4	\$9,345	\$3,755	\$9,345
2011-13	Small Fence Strike Reduction	Upper Snake	8	93.1	\$2,100	\$1,100	\$2,100
2011-12	Jefferson Fire Sagebrush Seeding on Idaho Department of Lands	Upper Snake	9	90.4	\$7,540	\$2,000	\$7,540
2011-07	Lower House Creek Pond Jack Fence Project	Jarbidge	10	83.1	\$2,000	\$6,000	\$2,000
2011-04	Seasonal Habitat, Migration Corridor Delineation and Nesting Habitat Assessments	Challis	11	82.4	\$26,900	\$35,400	\$26,900
2011-15	Camel Rock Sagebrush Steppe Restoration	South Magic Valley	12	75.8	\$17,000	\$336,222	Do not fund
2011-03	Big Creek Ranch Sage-grouse Habitat Restoration Plan	Challis	13	74.8	\$20,000	\$155,000	Do not fund
2011-14	WCLWG Sage-grouse Telemetry Investigations	West Central	14	68.6	\$22,900	\$8,985	Do not fund
2011-05	Blackfoot River Southern Riparian Fence	East Idaho Uplands	15	40.8	\$97,900	\$64,000	Do not fund
<b>TOTALS</b>					\$292,635	\$710,192	\$134,835

## Recommended Changes to Review Criteria and Process

During the course of the project review the SAC also identified the following recommended changes to future funding review and ranking processes (this list also includes items identified in the 2010 review that were not addressed in this review):

- Review applications form and sync up better with review criteria (2010)
- Revisit approach to NEPA (i.e., NEPA needs to be completed or make change in scoring criteria) (2010)
- Consider requiring match to address the problem with University of Idaho not being allowed to show any match unless it is required (2010)
- Review monitoring criteria #3 for monitoring projects (doesn't make sense) (2010 and 2011)
- Review criteria changes (2011):
  - Add language to review criteria or application reminding proponents that the overall quality, presentation, and completeness of their application will play a significant role in how it ranks.
  - Question 3 – Land Ownership. This question is confusing when ranking. Need to clarify what is meant e.g., some projects are mostly on federal land but include some state or private land. How should those be counted?
  - Question 4 – Match. Need to clarify – as presently presented there are two questions 1) is match funding secured? 2) what is percentage or match? Also need to clarify how percentage is measured i.e., percentage of total project cost which includes requested funds plus all match.
  - Question 8 – Monitoring. This question is more appropriate to a habitat project. Not good for ranking monitoring/telemetry projects. Need to have separate question for monitoring/telemetry projects and not rank them using this question.
  - Question 13 – Scale of project (habitat). Need some way to do conversions or specific point scale for linear feet (fences).
  - Question 14 – Benefits. Need to add a mid point score. SAC members were really frustrated with having to pick 0 or 15.
  - New question –Need some way to capture other considerations e.g., was proposal well written, are there significant gaps in the proposal, are there other significant considerations that need to be accounted for (e.g., overstating costs or match, etc.)

## Brainstorm – How to Improve LWG Participation

In light of some of the day's discussions about limited landowner/private citizen participation in a number of the LWGs, Alison asked each of the SAC members to provide input on potential ways to improve participation in LWGs. The SAC members and other participants provided the following suggestions:

- Visits with permittees to encourage NRCS SGI participation.
- Get them involved in doing something on the ground. Make it come alive. Birds and habitat are abstract until you get out in the field.

- Provide a financial incentive or a situation that directly impacts their financial interests. Ranchers are business people, if they don't have an economic incentive but only restrictions what the benefit?
- Invite people to make presentations to encourage ownership.
- Feed them food, have a barbeque or something. Door prizes.
- Have USFWS attend and provide updates and answer questions.
- We will lose the birds if we don't get active involvement.
- Ranchers are afraid they'll lose something if they get involved, if they let people know there are birds on their land. Some ranchers quit because we're not able to help them with their habitat.
- It's a complicated story to tell. You have to figure out how to condense the story enough to get people's interest – once they're interested you can provide more detail.
- Stop hunting.
- Some ranchers don't want to pay for work to improve federal land, it is not their land. If you do work on it, it all belongs to BLM.
- Field tours.
- Reach out to other groups like the Pioneer Alliance and the Central Idaho grazing network.
- Agency folks have to be willing to listen to landowners about what they are seeing, e.g., effects of predation.
- Agency folks need to ask questions of landowners, show appreciation when they show up. Give landowners credit for the work they have done. Ranchers need to do the same for agency folks.
- Will Rodgers song, "We're all ignorant only on different subjects"
- It costs time and money to come to meetings. There needs to be something worth coming for.
- Need better advocacy and advertising. Wool Growers, Idaho Cattle Associations, Idaho Department of Agriculture, etc. could help advocate for the importance of getting involved.
- When the Shoshone Basin group started they were driven by controversy. They built success around some of their on the ground projects.
- Doesn't have to be all sage-grouse specific.
- Need to get past us and them.
- We should go out to people rather than asking them to come to us. Spend time on the ground with landowners.
- Post information about the meeting content, areas of discussion, background etc. on the internet so that people have more information to decide if they want to come to the meeting.
- SGI programs are positive – not negative. Build on that.

- What would motivate agency people to go to the meetings if they weren't being paid? Do that.
- Its not about meetings, its about one-on-one discussions across the kitchen table.

## Hunting Discussion

Lynn Burtenshaw asked for time on the agenda to ask the SAC if members would be willing to support a proposal to close the sage-grouse hunting season. Alison suggested that as a starting point a poll of SAC members be conducted to see what level of support there was for the proposal. Based on a straw poll with no discussion, seven SAC members were opposed to closing the hunting season throughout the state and six SAC members supported the idea.

Alison reviewed the history of development of the hunting chapter in the state plan noting that the development of the hunting and predation sections of the plans were some of the most difficult to develop and were among the most contentious and difficult discussions. She noted that the existing guidelines for determining the hunting season were the result of intense and careful discussion. Steve G. noted that the state plan currently allows seasons to be closed on very short notice if needed e.g., in the case of the Murphy Complex Fire.

Alison polled the SAC members on what factors might alter their initial views. SAC members identified some potential factors e.g., additional scientific information, innovative approaches to addressing hunting seasons, sort-term closure with active monitoring, etc.

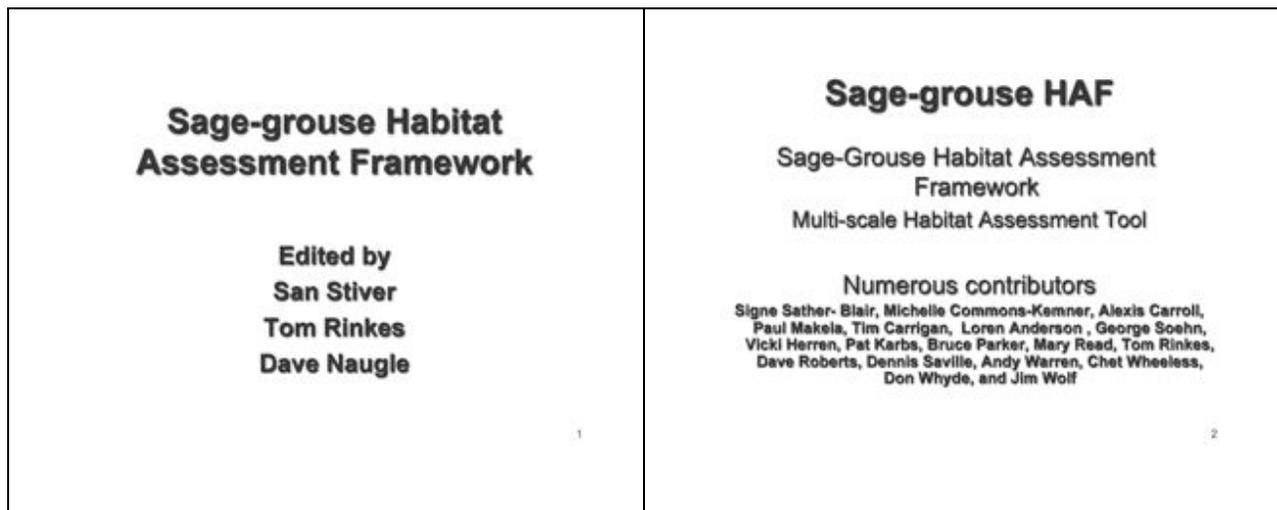
After additional discussion, the majority of SAC members indicated that they would like to have additional discussions about hunting and predation at future meetings. Alison said they would add that to future agendas.

### Follow-up:

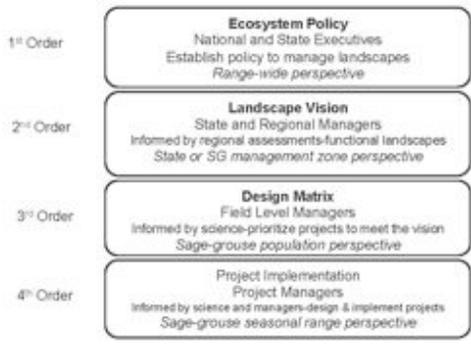
- Add discussion and presentations on hunting and predation to future SAC agendas.

## BLM Habitat Assessment Framework

Tom Rinkes gave the following presentation on BLM's Habitat Assessment Framework:

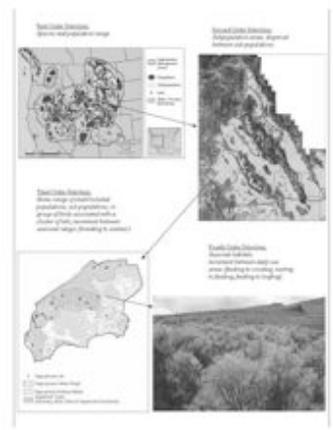


<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sage-grouse HAF</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Technical Working Group</i></li> </ul> <p>Jack Connelly (ID), Tony Apa (CO), Jim Sedinger (Univ. NV), Mike Pellant (BLM GB), Rick Miller (OSU), Paul Roush (BLM CA), Dick Mayberry (BLM WO), Steve Knick (USGS), Cameron Aldridge (CSU), Ann Hild (Univ. of WY), Sherm Karl (BLM NOC), Clint McCarthy (FS), Dave Naugle (Univ. of MT), Danielle Flynn (BLM WO), Mike Gregg (FWS), Don Major (BLM/TNC), Bruce Durtche (BLM NOC), Gordon Toevs (BLM WO), Mary Rowland (FS), Brendan Moynahan (NPS)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HAF Organization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• editors envision its implementation</li> <li>• Provides the life requisites, indicators and characteristics for sage-grouse at each scale of habitat selection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– and methodology for completing data collection and assessments at each scale</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Contains forms for data collection</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Application</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HAF was developed for use by resource managers working closely with specialists in range management, landscape ecology, GIS, botany, wildlife, and other associated disciplines. To be fully functional, the HAF will require input from policy and operational staff. Flexibility is part of the suggested procedures and professional judgment will be required in its application, hence the need for experience.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HAF</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sage-grouse represent a focal species for sagebrush conservation because they select habitats at multiple scales</li> <li>• Cumulative impacts that reduce and degrade habitat continue to overwhelm sagebrush systems and leave managers struggling to maintain viable populations</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">6</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HAF Components</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scales</li> <li>• Habitat indicators</li> <li>• Vegetation Attributes</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">7</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Scale Assessments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the HAF requires practitioners at each scale to use their best analytical skills, resources and flexibility to identify priority landscapes and implement conservation actions that benefit populations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– People</li> <li>– Sage-grouse</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">8</p>



The hierarchy in HNF is analogous to the 4 orders of habitat selection in sage-grouse (Johnson 1980)

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### Indicators

- **Broad-scale Habitat Indicators**
- **Mid-scale Habitat Indicators**
  - Hbt Pop./subpop. (availability, connectivity, movement by linkage areas)
- **Fine-Scale Habitat Indicators**
  - Refine home range hbt. descriptions (availability, connectivity, anthropogenic disturbances)
- **Site-scale Habitat Indicators**
  - Individual seasonal habitats

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### Indicators

- **Habitat indicators**
- **Metric description**
- **Relationship to habitat suitability**

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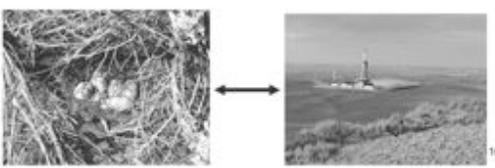
### Site Scale Methods

- **Generally do not change from draft Idaho method (2000)**
  - Updated collection forms
  - Updated forb forms
  - Herrick et al. (2005) – line-point intercept
  - Minimized qualitative forms

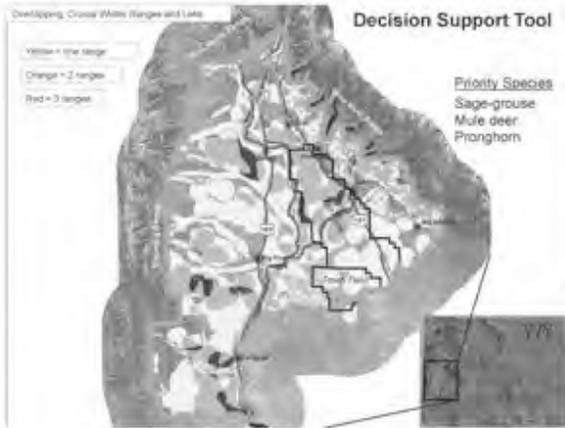
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### Integrating Information Between Scales

- **Overlay information from each scale**
- **Site Scale vs Broad scale**
  - Data collected at site
  - Look out at the landscape



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## Summary



- Three sections
- Defines the important indicators at each scale as well as methods to describe existing habitat
- Used for both Greater and Gunnison sage-grouse
- Basically an inventory of current habitat conditions
  - Subsequent measurements = monitoring
- Assist resource managers to think about sage-grouse habitat use at multiple scales and how different ecological processes, and other human actions affect grouse.

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## HAF Location

- [http://gf.state.wy.us/wildlife/wildlife\\_management/sagegrouse/pdf/SG%20Habitat%20Assessment%20August%202010.pdf](http://gf.state.wy.us/wildlife/wildlife_management/sagegrouse/pdf/SG%20Habitat%20Assessment%20August%202010.pdf)

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## BLM's Landscape Monitoring Project

## BLM's Landscape Monitoring Project

- BLM needs a better way to document the condition and trend of public lands in light of multiple uses

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<p align="center"><b>BLM's Landscape Monitoring Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides the cross jurisdictional data needed to ensure that BLM management actions do not hinder the ability of the land to sustain its attributes across landscapes</li> <li>• Office of Management and Budget request for BLM to find a "better and more easily understood way to report on the condition" of public lands above the local level</li> </ul> <p align="right">23</p>	<p align="center"><b>BLM's Landscape Monitoring Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Natural Resource Conservation Service MOU</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) methods</li> <li>– Long term project</li> <li>– 1,000 data points per year on BLM</li> <li>– Five year data collection cycle</li> <li>– Data will be summarized into several estimates based on major land resource groups</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p align="right">24</p>
<p align="center"><b>BLM's Landscape Monitoring Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As more points are sampled, the precision of the estimates will increase and provide for better understanding of the collective efforts of actions taken on soil site stability, ecosystem function, hydrologic function and other attributes of public lands</li> </ul> <p align="right">25</p>	<p align="center"><b>BLM's Landscape Monitoring Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>FY2012 – BLM and NRCS will increase the number of points sampled using NRI protocols on both BLM and private lands in priority sage-grouse habitat</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– In addition to BLM's baseline of 1,000 points</li> <li>– 30 of the most significant sage-grouse populations across the west</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p align="right">26</p>
<p align="center"><b>BLM's Landscape Monitoring Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>BLM and NRCS will work with the following to identify the 30 most important sage-grouse populations to determine condition and trend information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– State Wildlife Agencies</li> <li>– Western Governor's Association</li> <li>– Fish and Wildlife Service</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p align="right">27</p>	<p align="center"><b>BLM's Landscape Monitoring Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://web.blm.gov/internal/wo-500/directives/mou/BLM_MOU-220-2011-02.pdf">http://web.blm.gov/internal/wo-500/directives/mou/BLM_MOU-220-2011-02.pdf</a> MOU info</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/nri/">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/nri/</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– NRI info</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p align="right">28</p>

## Next Steps

The next SAC meeting date and SAC subcommittee meeting dates will be identified in the near term.

## Attachment 1. December 15, 2010 Funding Subcommittee Meeting Agenda and Notes

### **December 15, 2010 Meeting Agenda Items, Discussion, and Next Steps**

Funding Subcommittee members attending the meeting were; Karen Fullen, Lynn Burtenshaw, and Don Kemner.

#### Agenda Topic: Review Status of Chapter 6 Funding Subcommittee Tasks

- 1) What has been accomplished? Update dates as appropriate.
  - a) The Subcommittee discussed Task 6.2.18; Pursue opportunity to use uncompensated time and expenses from non-governmental organization members, landowners, and general public for funding cost share on sage-grouse projects. A form was created in 2009.
  - b) The Subcommittee discussed Task 6.1.4; Identify funding needs and funding sources to implement the Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho (i.e. State Plan) and LWG plans, including support for LWG facilitators.
  - c) Task dates will be addressed at the next subcommittee meeting.
- 2) What remains to be done?
  - a) See 1b above.
- 3) Willingness of Partners to Fund Chapter 6 Actions
  - b) The subcommittee did not discuss this topic. A review of all Chapter 6 tasks would identify active partners.

Next Step: Uncompensated time and expenses will be documented for reference in future grant opportunities.

#### Agenda Topic: SAC Funding Cycle and Funding Solicitation

- 1) Possibility of a ongoing rolling review
  - a) The subcommittee did not discuss this agenda item.
- 2) Syncing the OSC RFP with the NRCS funding cycle
  - a) The Subcommittee considered syncing the OSC RFP with the NRCS funding cycle. NRCS does not have a set schedule for their funding cycle. Sign-up for NRCS programs various from year to year; thus it is not possible to sync the OSC RFP with the NRCS programs.
  - b) Syncing with NRCS is a consideration if and when NRCS develops a set schedule.
- 3) Other opportunities
  - a) Consider applying for a NRCS Conservation Innovative Grant (CIG) to fund the Education Subcommittee's proposed 2011 conference. Upon a quick review of the CIG criteria, the subcommittee recommended the conference include;
    - How to promote SGI
    - Conduct technology transfer of habitat restoration techniques to producers

- Conduct technology transfer of monitoring techniques based upon the latest research.

Next Steps: Karen will check on CIG timeline; when do CIG funds have to be spent and does the CIG timeline fit the conference timeline?

Agenda Topic: NRCS Sage-grouse Initiative Funding

- 1) How to help subscribe funding? Responses so far?
  - a) Karen reported it was too early in the sign-up to know how many landowners may participate in SGI.
  - b) The Subcommittee decided to fund certain SGI conservation practices (see attached list)
  - c) The Subcommittee thought it would be too cumbersome for producers to apply for OSC funds via the RFP application. The subcommittee decided conservation practices will be ranked in order of how the practice addresses threats in the State Plan. The ranking would be used if there were more requests than available funding.
  - d) 10 percent cost share would be offered on the selected conservation practices
  - e) A maximum of \$20,000 cost-share will be available.
- 2) Possibility of funding a position to promote and implement SGI and other sage-grouse habitat projects.
  - a) Sal Palazzalo of Idaho Fish and Game discussed the Department's farm bill coordinator program. Three Department full time positions, two temp positions, and two Pheasants Forever positions are working in NRCS county offices; primarily eastern and north-central Idaho. They work with producers interested in NRCS farm bill conservation programs including; CRP, SAFE, EQIP, and WHIP.
  - b) The subcommittee discussed providing partial funding for a position focused upon implementing SGI and other sage-grouse habitat projects. Don Kemner said the position would likely be employed by someone other than Idaho Fish and Game. The subcommittee recommended \$15,000 of Fish and Game discretionary funds should be made available to fund a position.

Next Step: Don Kemner and Sal Palazzalo will follow up with potential partners.

Next Step: Don Kemner will report outcome at the next SAC meeting.

Agenda Topic: Future Funding for SAC and LWGs.

- 1) Don Kemner contacted Mike Roach prior to the subcommittee meeting. There were no new developments on OSC request for sage-grouse management funding.
- 2) Per the October SAC meeting next steps, Don discussed the current and future funding with LWG facilitators prior to the subcommittee meeting. Funding for LWG facilitation is expected to run out June 30, 2011. Additional funding is being sought. The facilitators will share the message with the LWGs.

Agenda Topic: Other Funding Sources to be Developed?

- 1) The subcommittee did not discuss this topic in detail. The subcommittee will search for additional funding sources for consideration.

Funding Subcommittee Tasks from Chapter 6	Responsible Party	2006-2008 Accomplishments	Next Steps or Target Deadline
6.2.18. Pursue opportunity to use uncompensated time and expenses from non-governmental organization members, landowners, and general public for funding cost share on sage-grouse projects.	SAC Funding Subcommittee	<u>A form to document uncompensated time and expenses was completed in 2009.</u>	Target Deadline: July 2010 and annually thereafter.  Uncompensated time and expenses will be documented for reference in future grant opportunities.
6.1.4. Identify funding needs and funding sources to implement the Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho (i.e. State Plan) and LWG plans, including support for LWG facilitators.	LWGs, Sage-grouse Advisory Committee (SAC), SAC Funding Subcommittee	<u>Funding and cost-share has been received from numerous organizations including Bureau of Land Management (BLM), IDFG, U.S. Forest Service (FS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), Department of Energy (DOE), North American Grouse Partnership, the Nature Conservancy (TNC), Resource Conservation and Development councils, soil conservation districts, cooperative weed management areas, private landowners, other non-governmental organization, Shoshone-Paiute Tribes, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, etc.</u>	Next Steps: Develop a 5-year plan of funding needs and existing commitments for plan implementation by October 31, 2010. This plan will be updated in October each year.  A funding summary will be included in the 2009 Annual Statewide Sage-grouse Report and annually thereafter.  The subcommittee will draft an outline of funding needs and existing commitments for review at the next SAC meeting.

## Attachment 2. SAC TAT December 14, 2010 Meeting Notes

### Chapter 6 SAC TAT Tasks

#### December 14, 2010 SAC TAT Work Session

SAC TAT members attending: Ann Moser, Paul Makela, Jack Depperschmidt, Robb Mickelson, Steve Goddard, Karen Fullen, Alan Sands, Brett Dumas, Ron Kay, and Kendra Womack.

Task	Responsible Party	2006-2008 Accomplishments 2010 Progress in Red	Next Steps or Target Deadline Updated December 14, 2010
6.2.3. Review USFWS Status Report and <i>Ecology and Conservation of Greater Sage-grouse: a Landscape Species and its Habitats</i> to be published in <i>Studies in Avian Biology</i> winter 2009/2010.	SAC TAT	3 presentations thus far at SAC meetings. Also, the SAB papers will be published in a single volume. SAC members may want to consider purchasing their own copies from the publisher.  Kendra Womack, USFWS, summarized the USFWS findings at the March 2010 SAC meeting.	Target Deadline: April 2010. SAC TAT suggests that this is an ongoing task.  We still like the approach that we or others will give presentations on these chapters, but we would like to focus on local chapter authors (e.g., Steve Knick, Jack Connelly, others) giving the presentations.  There may also be the potential for presentations on new research that has been done or available since the SAB volume was written.
6.2.5. Compile and post on the IDFG website the <i>Annual Statewide Sage-grouse Report</i> which will include: LWG Annual Reports, Chapter 6 Accomplishments, and Annual SAC Report.	SAC TAT	First Statewide LWG Annual Report published March 2008.	Next Steps: Publish by March 1, annually  No change.
6.2.6. Update sage-grouse page on IDFG website with SAC meeting summaries, quarterly newsletters, links to current literature by subject and other information.	SAC TAT	Upgraded webpage in 2008.  SAC meeting summaries and newsletters are current on sage-grouse webpage.	Next Steps: Quarterly  No change.

Task	Responsible Party	2006-2008 Accomplishments 2010 Progress in Red	Next Steps or Target Deadline Updated December 14, 2010
<p>6.4.2.9. Coordinate with the Idaho Office of Energy Resources to regularly obtain updated geospatial information on new and proposed energy projects (e.g., wind energy and MET towers; electrical transmission; geothermal development; and oil and gas pipelines) and associated infrastructure (e.g., distribution lines and roads). Consider posting data on <a href="http://www.insideidaho.org">www.insideidaho.org</a></p>	<p>SAC TAT</p>		<p>Target Deadline: Set up process by July 1, 2010. Will revisit timeline after Brett talks with Lisa.</p> <p>IDWR GIS also has some stewardship of this type of data.</p> <p>It is easier to get list of proposed projects and status but often can't get geospatial data.</p> <p>Brett will talk with Lisa LaBolle (ID Office of Energy Resources) about how they can or if they can help us with this task. We will decide what to do next depending on what she says. Paul M. has also provided a GIS contact name at IDWR who BLM has coordinated with in the past to obtain wind-related GIS information/maps.</p>
<p>6.4.3.2. Review available cheatgrass occurrence maps and determine which would be most suitable for sage-grouse habitat mapping needs.</p>	<p>SAC TAT, in coordination with BLM</p>	<p>Several cheatgrass occurrence maps are currently being developed by BLM and others.</p> <p>Presentation by Don Major at October 2010 SAC meeting.</p>	<p>Target Deadline: 2010. New target deadline June 2011.</p> <p>Don Major will write an article for a SAC newsletter.</p> <p>Paul will keep us up to date on Don's progress. The goal would be to have this available to Alan to add to his REA map.</p> <p>Robb Mickelsen will contact Don M. to discuss the availability of USFS plot data on the Curlew National Grasslands that may be helpful with validation Paul, Alan, Don Major, and Robb will coordinate further, including how to incorporate the cheatgrass risk mapping into the REAs. An initial meeting for this has been set up for Feb 8, 2011.</p>

Task	Responsible Party	2006-2008 Accomplishments 2010 Progress in Red	Next Steps or Target Deadline Updated December 14, 2010
6.4.3.3. Identify priority annual grasslands for restoration.	SAC TAT in coordination with LWGs		Target Deadline: Based on completion of 6.4.3.2. <b>New target deadline December 2011.</b>  Will be done in combination with REAs – see 6.6.2.
6.4.3.4. Distribute prioritized annual grassland maps to LWGs.	SAC TAT		Target Deadline: Based on completion of 6.4.3.3. <b>New target deadline March 2012 at LWG annual report.</b>  Will be done in combination with REAs – see 6.6.2.

Task	Responsible Party	2006-2008 Accomplishments 2010 Progress in Red	Next Steps or Target Deadline Updated December 14, 2010
6.4.5.3. Develop conservation measures for OHV, mountain bike, and other organized recreational events in sage-grouse habitats to minimize impacts to leks and identified important seasonal habitats.	SAC TAT, BLM, FS, IDL, Idaho Parks and Recreation	<p>The FS develops conservation measures during Travel Planning on each forest that has sage-grouse habitat.</p> <p>SAC TAT members agreed to the following approach: SAC TAT members associated with responsible agencies could provide measures already in place. The SAC TAT would compile and review the list and agree to a set of conservation measures. From there, we'd have to see how we adopt the conservation measures (amendment to State Plan, a letter to agencies, etc.)</p>	<p>Target Deadline: SAC TAT to research appropriate conservation measures by April 1, 2010. Consideration by land management agencies during planning and permitting OHV and mountain bike events. <b>New target deadline April 2011.</b></p> <p>Paul provided the group with information from BLM recreation folks concerning what have been done in the past.</p> <p>Still need to address updating buffers and potentially the State Plan to capture the best available information.</p> <p>The SAC TAT drafted the following as a conservation measure:</p> <p>“Each event should have spatial and temporal restrictions to protect sage-grouse with an emphasis on avoiding disturbance during the breeding season and in known wintering areas. The restrictions should address disturbance at all points of the event, including the entire route, start and end points, and staging areas. Managers should use the best available information to ensure that noise buffers are adequate to protect sage-grouse.”</p>

Task	Responsible Party	2006-2008 Accomplishments 2010 Progress in Red	Next Steps or Target Deadline Updated December 14, 2010
6.4.8.3. Encourage FSA to incorporate information into FSA monthly newsletter regarding use of expiring CRP lands to benefit sage-grouse.	SAC TAT	IDFG and NRCS worked together to encourage CRP sign-ups in September.	<p>Target Deadline: September 2010 and annually thereafter. Target deadline for FSA newsletter article is April 1, 2011.</p> <p>There will be another CRP sign-up this spring. Sal Palazzolo (IDFG private lands coordinator) and Karen will write an article for an FSA newsletter this spring.</p> <p>Karen discussed some problems with the point system in the last sign-up. This is beyond the scope of this task, but Karen and Sal will together on this policy issue.</p>
6.4.9.1. Collect and interpret climate change information significant to sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat. Disseminate to SAC and LWGs.	SAC TAT, in coordination with USGS, Great Basin Restoration Initiative, and FS Research Stations	SAC TAT members suggested presentations by experts at SAC meetings.	<p>Target Deadline: October 2010 and ongoing. SAC TAT suggested a new target deadline of October 2011 but we need to check with Don Major first.</p> <p>Don Major is running models on how climate change may affect sagebrush and sage-grouse. Don has agreed to give us a presentation at a SAC meeting in the future. We may also be able to incorporate spatial data/modeling from the sage-grouse habitat Challenge Cost Share project underway.</p>
6.4.9.2. Explore scenario planning relative to climate change and sagebrush steppe. Disseminate to SAC and LWGs.	SAC TAT		<p>Target Deadline: October 2011. SAC TAT suggested target deadline of October 2012.</p> <p>See above, depending on results of Don Major's work.</p>

Task	Responsible Party	2006-2008 Accomplishments 2010 Progress in Red	Next Steps or Target Deadline Updated December 14, 2010
6.4.10.2. Evaluate and disseminate information on the effectiveness, economic and technical feasibility, and lessons learned from various conifer removal treatments.	LWGs, SAC TAT, land management agencies, USGS, and FS Research Stations.	Potential future presentations at a SAC meeting by Art Talsma, TNC, or Lance Okeson, BLM.	<p>Target Deadline: January 2010 and annually thereafter. Revised target deadline Spring 2011</p> <p>SAC TAT will pursue having Art Talsma or Lance Okeson write an article for the Winter or Spring 2011 newsletter</p> <p>There also will be some information on an NRCS-funded graduate student project at U of I looking at juniper removal effects on sage-grouse in Oregon. Results may be made available Fall 2011. We suggested the graduate student come to a 2011 or 2012 SAC meeting.</p>
6.4.12.1. Collect available studies and information on predation effects on sage-grouse, disseminate information, and identify additional research needs.	SAC TAT, in coordination with LWGs	<p>Studies have been collected, but need to determine best way to disseminate the information.</p> <p>SAB Chapter 8 plus 5 recent papers (compiled by Jericho Whiting).</p>	<p>Target Deadline: April 2010. Revised deadline April 2011.</p> <p>Jack D. will summarize/synthesize the information in the predation articles and write an article for the spring SAC newsletter.</p>

Task	Responsible Party	2006-2008 Accomplishments 2010 Progress in Red	Next Steps or Target Deadline Updated December 14, 2010
6.4.13.8. Document and report sagebrush acreage converted to urban/exurban development annually by county.	SAC TAT, in cooperation with LWGs	Reported by SGPA in 2009 LWG Annual Report. Requested for 2010.	<p>Target Deadline: Report in Statewide LWG Annual Report. Ann and Alan will investigate other methods to answer this question and report back to SAC TAT by April 2011.</p> <p>The SAC TAT suggested other potential ways to answer this question:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Domestic wells – can this be used as a surrogate to track development and trends? Can get from IDWR by county.</li> <li>2. A GIS person might be able to do a “Change Detection” between years of aerial photography.</li> <li>3. IDWR might have used this type of information for water rights adjudication.</li> <li>4. How often is the National Land Cover map updated and could this be a way to measure the changes?</li> </ol> <p>We also may be able to get at this question by changing the way we ask for this information in the LWG annual reports. For example, asking them if the threat is increasing, decreasing, or not changing may be sufficient to track the threat.</p>

Task	Responsible Party	2006-2008 Accomplishments 2010 Progress in Red	Next Steps or Target Deadline Updated December 14, 2010
6.4.16.2. Document and report sagebrush acreage converted to agriculture annually by county.	SAC TAT, NRCS, in cooperation with LWGs	Reported by SGPA in 2009 LWG Annual Report. Requested for 2010.	Target Deadline: Report in Statewide LWG Annual Report. See 6.4.13.8 for new deadline and suggested approach.
6.5.2.1. Review and encourage the use of the national Sage-grouse Habitat Assessment Framework when available.	SAC TAT	Framework was finalized June 2010.	<p>Target Deadline: Pending completion of Framework document in 2010 by national Framework team. Revised deadline April 2011.</p> <p>Although the Framework is completed, Paul said BLM at the national level hasn't formalized it as policy.</p> <p>Tom Rinkes (one of the authors) will give us a presentation at the April SAC meeting.</p> <p>Paul will email the document or a link to the SAC TAT.</p> <p>We can recommend it as a tool that is available to agencies and LWGs.</p>
6.5.2.4. Develop and implement long-term habitat and threats monitoring programs, with the focus on: areas of priority to LWGs; habitats associated with priority lek routes; areas where land uses or threats have changed; or unique areas of local or regional importance.	<p>SAC TAT, in cooperation with IDFG, BLM, FS, DOE, and LWGs</p> <p>IDL should also be a responsible party.</p>		<p>Target Deadline: March 2010. Revised deadline March 2011 for habitat monitoring methods list and December 2011 for proposed changes to 2011 LWG Annual Report Form.</p> <p>Habitat Monitoring: The SAC TAT agreed that the scale of the habitat monitoring tasks was beyond our scope. However, we can recommend the use of other standardized protocols (e.g., Jornada, NRCS, and Framework).</p> <p>Ann will compile the different methods being used and at what scale. We also need to consider sample size – the Framework has a suggestion for sample size.</p>

Task	Responsible Party	2006-2008 Accomplishments 2010 Progress in Red	Next Steps or Target Deadline Updated December 14, 2010
			<p>Threats Monitoring: LWGs are reporting new threats in the LWG annual report. There is also a potential to update threats based on 6.4.2.9. The USFWS spreadsheets for datacall were also a good way to track threats statewide. They will also ask us this again during the annual Candidate Notice of Review.</p> <p>The SAC TAT recommends that we change the way we ask LWGs to report threats. We need to ask them to report on the status of the Threats identified in their LWG plan in addition to new threats. Since it is difficult to get quantitative data, we can ask qualitatively – for example is the threat increasing, decreasing, or stable (or some type of numerical ranking). We also want to ask whether a threat has changed because of lack of agency coordination.</p> <p>We would summarize this at the local and state level in the LWG Annual Report.</p> <p>We need to improve coordination at the project level to better understand and address threats.</p>
6.5.2.6. Continue to explore and review emerging remote-sensing tools and products that would have the capability and accuracy to refine or replace the Sage-grouse Habitat Planning Map.	SAC TAT, in coordination with universities	In progress - current BLM /IDFG/U of I Challenge Cost Share project to map/model sage-grouse habitat and seasonal habitats.	<p>Target Deadline: Ongoing as tools and products are developed.</p> <p>The IDFG/U of I mapping products are expected to be available in March 2011.</p> <p>The map is expected to replace the Sage-grouse Habitat Planning Map, but will also include seasonal habitats.</p>

Task	Responsible Party	2006-2008 Accomplishments 2010 Progress in Red	Next Steps or Target Deadline Updated December 14, 2010
6.5.2.8. and 6.6.4. Provide training for habitat and restoration monitoring to LWGs and other interested parties to monitor local projects.	SAC TAT	No training requested to date.	Target Deadline: Ongoing, as requested. SAC TAT will conduct a field training at April 2011 SAC meeting.  We will have a field training day at the April SAC meeting. Ann and Alan will lead. This will include habitat assessment and restoration monitoring. The LWG representative can share the information with their group.
6.6.1. Utilize Conservation Efforts Database to track, summarize, and report habitat accomplishments statewide, as reported by LWGs in their annual report.	SAC TAT, LWGs, IDFG	Implemented in 2008.	Next Steps: Updated during LWG annual reporting process with results published in Statewide LWG Annual Report by March 1, annually.  No change. It is important that we monitor habitat projects along with threats – this is what USFWS will likely ask for in CNOR.
6.6.2. Identify Restoration Emphasis Areas (REAs) within each SGPA. Post pdf of map on the IDFG sage-grouse website. Post GIS data on the Inside Idaho website at <a href="http://www.insideidaho.org">www.insideidaho.org</a> . REAs are identified areas with missing, marginal, or degraded sage-grouse habitat characteristics that if successfully improved or restored should result in a positive sage-grouse population response.	IDFG/TNC, SAC TAT, BLM, FS, IDL, in cooperation with LWGs	Accomplishments: Draft REA maps were identified in most SGPAs by Fall 2008.	Next Steps: Updated by March 1, annually. We will make REAs more comprehensive for March 2012 update.  REAs are currently not available on Inside Idaho – post March 2011 update.  We discussed the need to include several new mapping products into the REAs process. This should include cheatgrass and cheatgrass risk mapping (6.4.3.2), sage-grouse breeding density maps, juniper invasion mapping (Don Major), and seeded perennial grasslands.  We also discussed the need to annually update the REA map to include removing areas that are recovering on their own.  We recognize that LWGs need to be

Task	Responsible Party	2006-2008 Accomplishments 2010 Progress in Red	Next Steps or Target Deadline Updated December 14, 2010
			<p>involved in final product.</p> <p>We also need to make the REAs readily available to LWGS. Brett suggested that hard copy maps or a map booklet be made available to each LWG – or at the very least be made available on the IDFG sage-grouse web pages.</p> <p>REAs may become more important in the future as funding becomes less available - LWGs will need good rationale for projects.</p>